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Charlton SPOTLIGHT

Exploring the History of the Charlton Comics Group

the WILL FRANZ interview

The creator of* Captain Willy Schultz *and* The Iron Corporal *on war and peace

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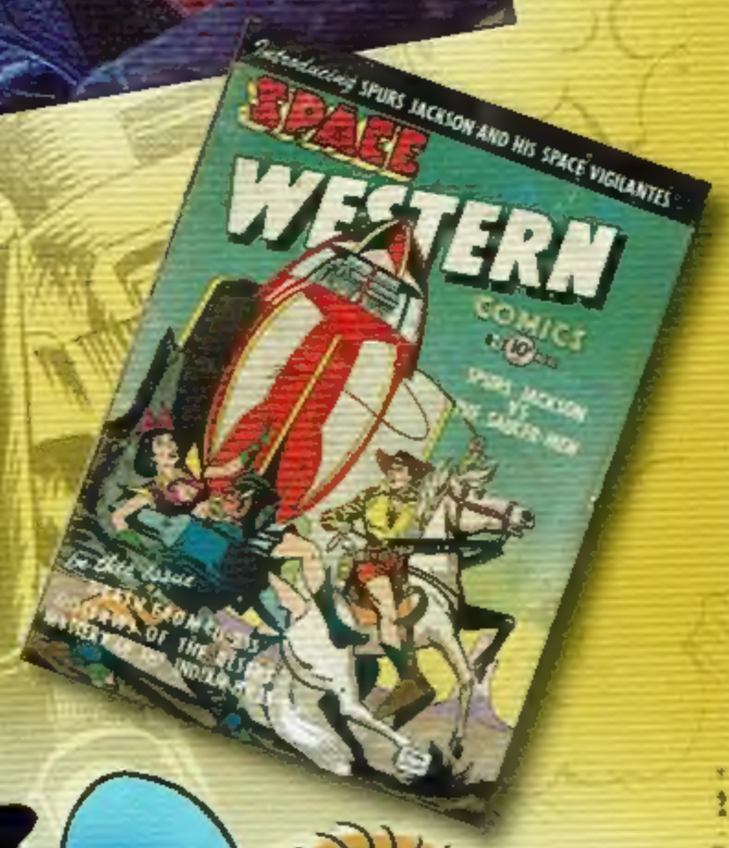

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co-starring Pudgy Pig and Bro. George™

+

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the WEIRD kids™

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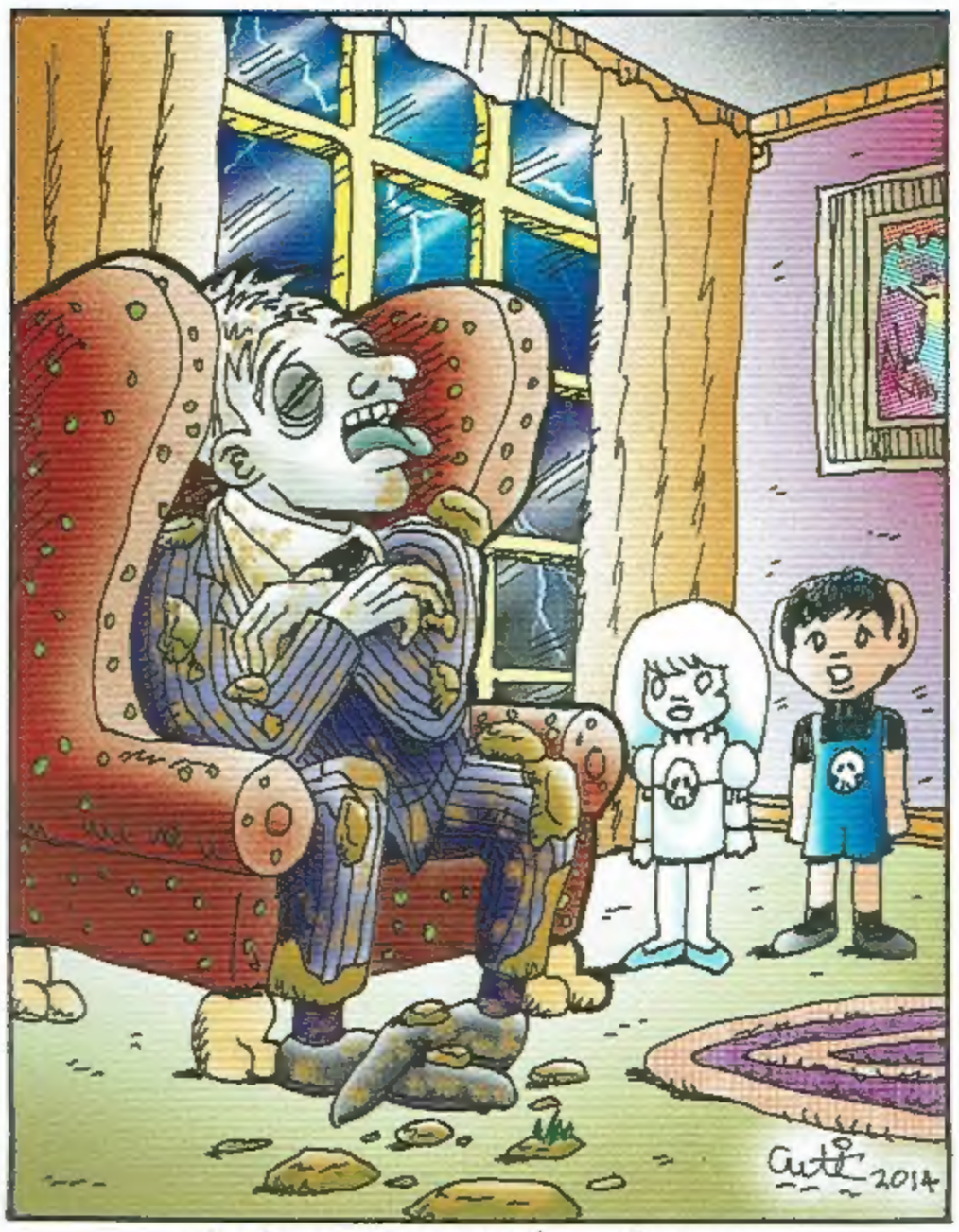
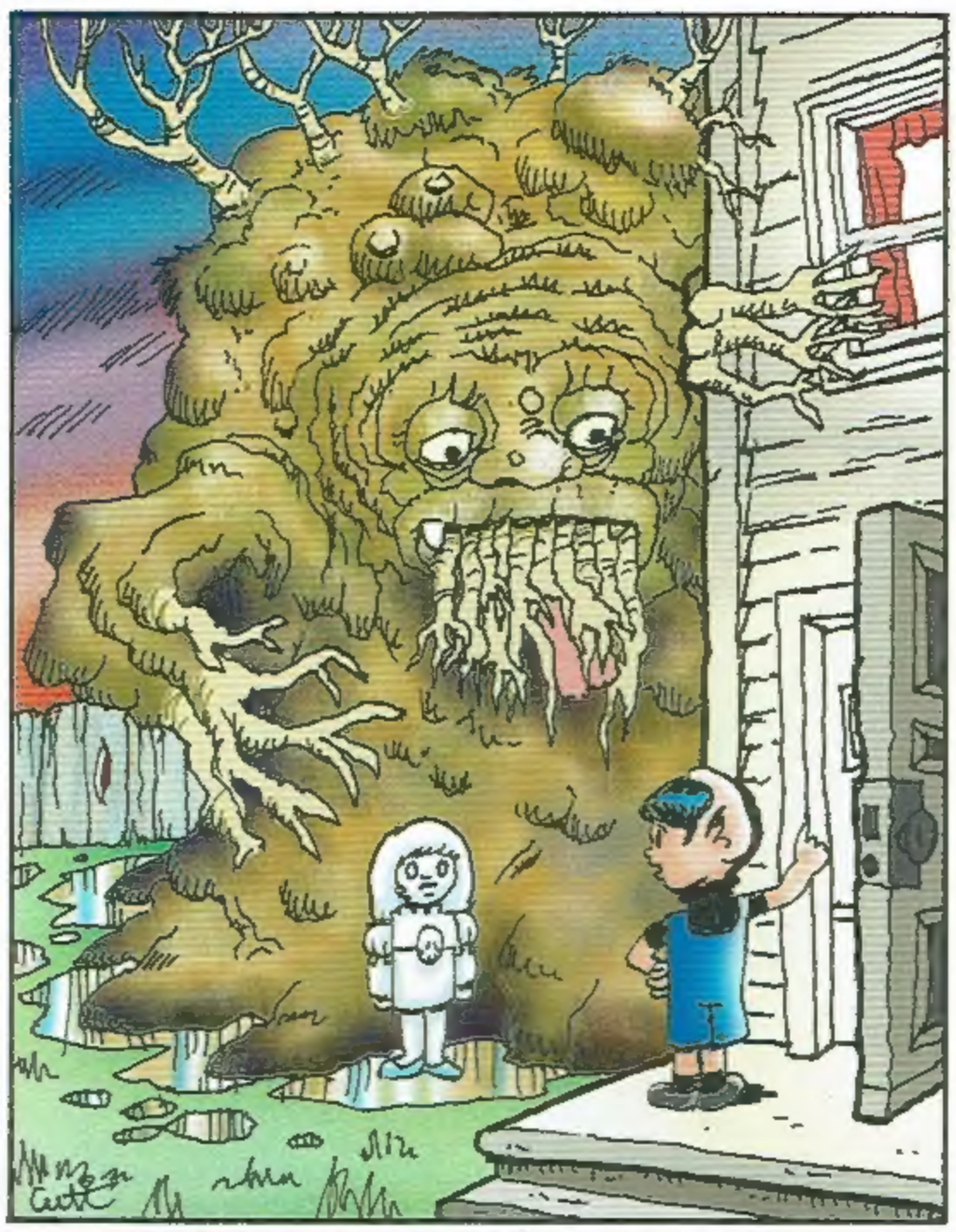
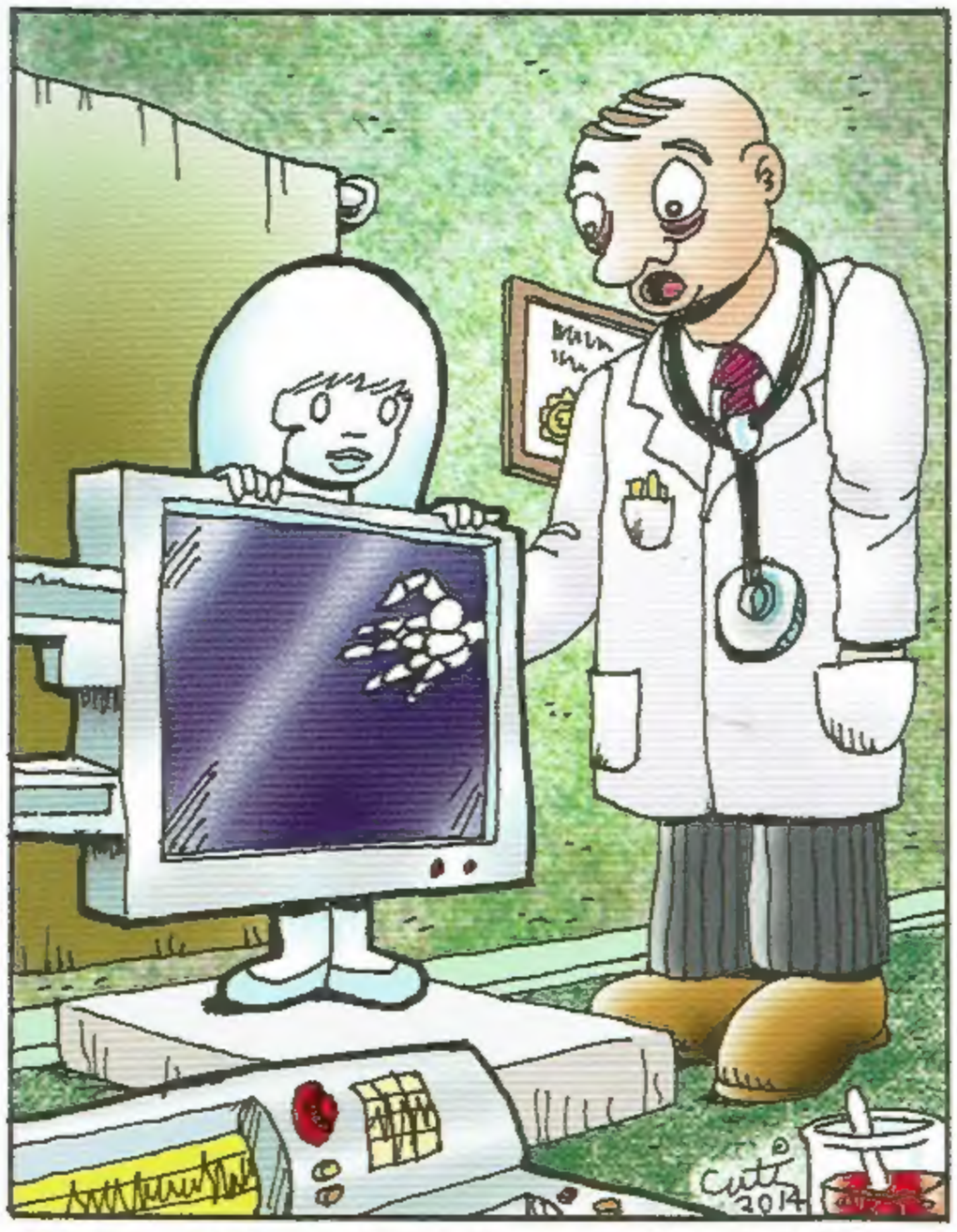


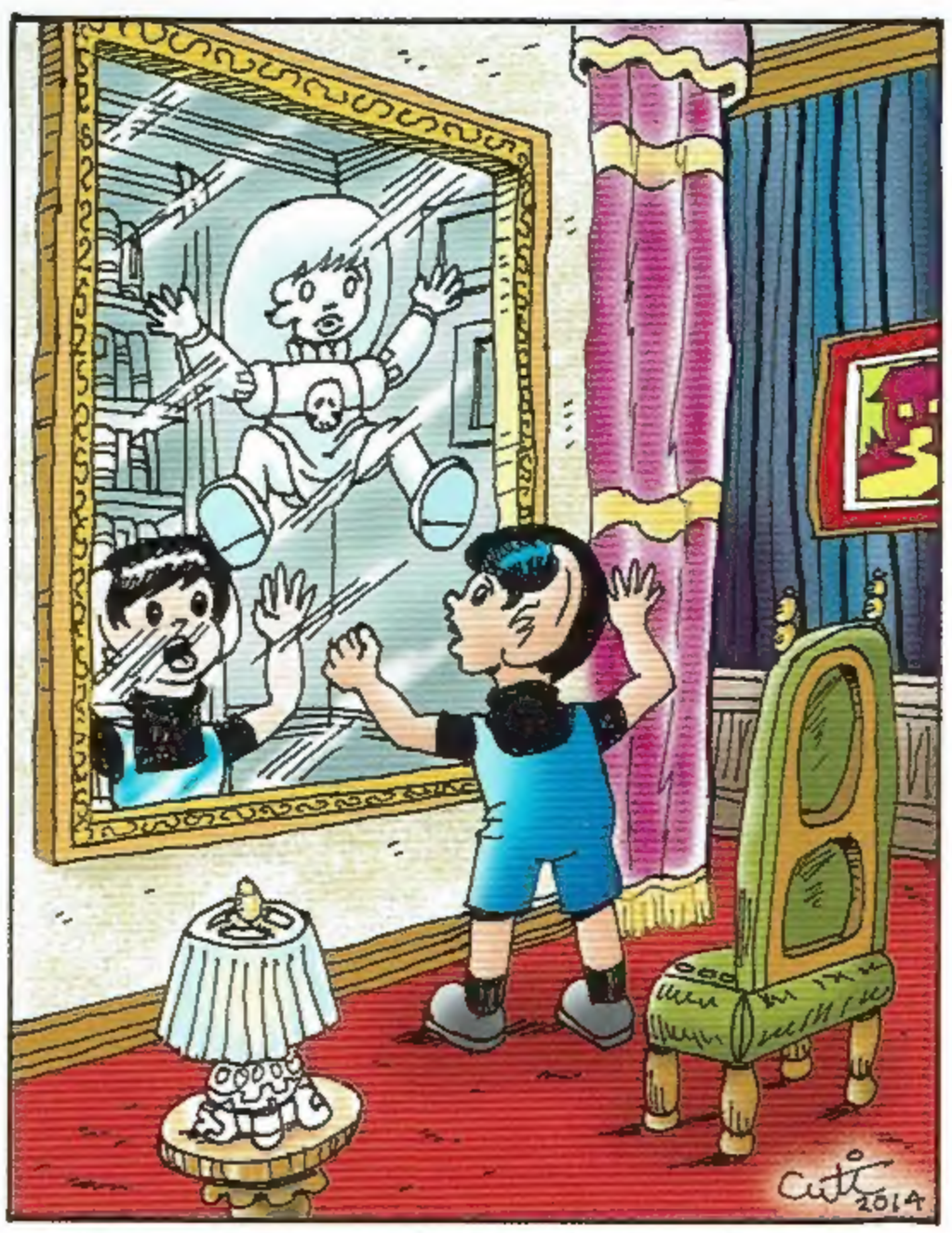
UNCLE WALDO'S BACK.



YOU CANNOT BRING HIM IN.
I JUST WAXED THE FLOORS.



THE MACHINE IS ON AND IS WORKING PERFECTLY. SEE? THERE IS **NOTHING** THERE!



YOU COME OUT OF THAT MIRROR, RIGHT NOW!

Charlton SPOTLIGHT

No. 9 WINTER-SPRING 2015-2016

Exploring the History of the Charlton Comics Group

FRONT COVER
Background image:
Army War Heroes #34 (Oct. 1969), art © 2015 Sam Glanzman

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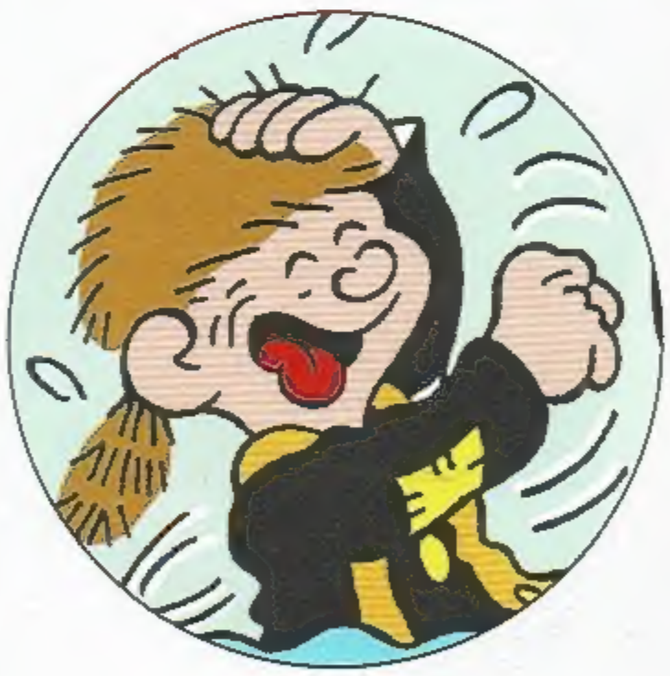

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the WILL FRANZ interview

conducted and transcribed by

Richard Arndt

The comic book field **has traditionally welcomed young talent. Jack Kirby was 19 when he became a pro; Jerry Robinson was 17, and Gil Kane, 16. Will Franz was but 15 years old when Charlton editor Dick Giordano bought his first stories and 16 when they were published. Though Will's early comics career was brief, his series creations for Charlton are still among the most highly regarded war comics stories of their era.**

An 18-year-old Will Franz at his drawing board in November 1968, writing for Charlton Comics.

Background: Will garbed for the 2011 Annual Tartan Day Parade down the Avenue of the Americas in Manhattan.
Photos courtesy of and © 2015 Will Franz.

Richard Arndt: *We're talking with Will Franz, writer for Charlton from 1967 to 1970, where he wrote "The Iron Corporal," "The Devil's Brigade," and the epic "The Lonely War of Capt. Willy Schultz," all with artist Sam Glanzman. He also wrote several stand-alone war stories for Charlton from 1967 to 1970 and 1972 to 1973 as well as contributing one excellent story to DC in 1972. Will, can you tell us a little about your background and your first exposure to comics?*

Will Franz: The books I read were *Classics Illustrated* and some of the Dell titles like *Gunsmoke*. Not superheroes. I was never into the DC or Marvel superhero material. Marvel was really in a fledgling mode at the time. Before that they'd done mostly monster, Western, and romance books. I read comics mostly for the drawings. If I didn't like the artist I didn't bother buying the book. I'd seen a lot of Sam Glanzman's work in the *Classics Illustrated* special editions on the Civil War or on the history of the army that Gilberton published. I really took notice of him. The first issue of *Combat* that I ever saw was #7 (Jan.-Mar. 1963), "Action on the Sunda Strait," which Glanzman drew. I wasn't that big a comic reader, though. I really wanted to be an illustrator rather than a writer.

Richard: *Those Dell war titles were outstanding for the period. Glanzman didn't just draw all the stories in* Combat *but also the entire contents of* World War Stories *and* Air War Stories. *All three books are worth looking for, because both the art and stories are first rate.*

Will: True.

Richard: *Outside of the couple of stories you penciled for Charlton in the late 1960s, did you do any other illustrative work?*

Will: The only comics I illustrated were those two for Charlton. One was my own story, called "Huertgen Minefield" [*Army War Heroes* #32, June 1969], and the other was a two-pager that Joe Gill wrote called "A Course in Murder" [*Army War Heroes* #36, Feb. 1970]. Anyhow, the diabetes that I developed at age 14 eventually made my hands unsteady, and the study and time necessary to devote to illustration at the time just made me feel that I couldn't be relied on to meet deadlines. So I drifted away from drawing. When I met up with Sam Glanzman, he liked the way I wrote because I wrote my scripts as a little comic book. As most kids do, I guess, who have an interest in drawing or writing comics. He encouraged me to continue writing. Then, when the Charlton editor at the time, Dick Giordano, liked what he saw of my writing, well, that was even greater encouragement. Right now, my hands aren't steady so I'm sure I made the right choice.

Will's first published comic book story appeared in ***Charlton Premiere*** v. 1 #19 (July 1967), illustrated by Charles Nicholas and Vince Alascia. Cover by Rocke Mastroserio. Story © 2015 Will Franz.

Richard: *How old were you when you actually approached Charlton? How did that come about?*

Will: Well, I'd written a letter to Sam. I think it was in 1965. I'd sent him some of my drawings for a critique. I'd sent it to "Sam Glanzman, c/o Dell Comics" because Dell was who published the *Combat* series that I'd seen Sam's art in. Sam sent back a very gracious letter, which critiqued my work, in which he seemed to like what he saw and mentioned that he wanted to meet me. He lived up in Commack, Long Island, at the time and I lived in Brooklyn. Commack was outside the borough. He wanted me to bring my swipe files, which are an artist's reference materials. I got dressed up and got on the Long Island Railroad, then chugged out to Commack where he met me. We talked, had lunch, and then he wanted to see my swipe file. I opened up my attaché case and he started laughing. Most of my swipe files were his books. I did have some books of World War II photographs and whatever, but he started laughing because he was hoping to use my resources to better his work and most of my resources were his published work already.

He kept an interest in me and told me he liked what he saw, even my story ideas, and encouraged me to put some short scripts together because Dick Giordano was looking for new material. I sent Dick four very short stories, only four pages apiece. I just threw them together. Sam had shown me the format that he preferred for scripts. Dick

GET ORIGINALS BACK
BOOK army WAR heroes ISSUE #30 PENCILS Willi Franz
TITLE HUERTGEN MINEFIELD INKS S-J-G
PGS. SCRIPT # B-1724 THIS PAGE 1 SCRIPT Willi Franz
8
21-Ad 22
WE HAD FOUND THE LOCATION OF THE BIG KRAUT BUILD-UP OF MEN AND MACHINES WHICH WOULD BE LAUNCHED IN A SWIFT AND DEVASTATING COUNTER-ATTACK ON THE AMERICAN POSITIONS IN THE MORNING. THE SS MACHINE GUNNERS HAD FORCED US TO TAKE A DIFFERENT ROUTE BACK TO OUR LINES... MAC DONALD WAS THE FIRST TO STEP ON ONE OF THEM...IT WAS OF THE TELLER VARIETY...AND KILLED CPL. STONE AS WELL...
HUERTGEN MINEFIELD
KER-BLAM
STORY – PENCILS WILLI FRANZ
B-1724

"Huertgen Minefield," in ***Army War Heroes*** #32 (June 1969), was one of but two Charlton stories penciled by Will, with inks by Sam Glanzman. Scan of the original art courtesy of Alan Goldsmith. Story and art © 2015 Will Franz and Sam Glanzman.

sent them back. He didn't want any of them, but he did critique them. He did like certain aspects and wanted to see more. I then sent him an idle little story I did about a sniper . . . a Viet Cong sniper and a Marine. The only reason I sent it to him was that Sam told me to send something back to him right away, that I shouldn't let him forget who I was. So I sent that one in quick and Dick loved it. He made it the cover story for an issue of *Charlton Premiere* [#19, July 1967]. Charles Nicholas drew it, Vince Alascia inked it, and to this day I'm a little embarrassed by it. It's really a bit of propaganda but I guess it made good copy for the time. Vietnam was a new war. This was 1966 and "The Sniper" was a standard blood-and-guts type of story. You know, the evil sniper and the hero Marine who gets him in the end. It was an "all will be well" type of story. Still, it got my foot in the door.

Dick was extremely gracious and extremely helpful. We started kicking around some ideas for series for the war books. I had always studied the German Army. It had always upset me how falsely the German Army was portrayed in all the comic books, all the movies and in a lot of the books that were out there. I'm not saying these guys were great guys. Understand that. But, to me, if you're going to accurately portray war, then it should be accurate! It shouldn't be propaganda. World War II was over. Enough with the dueling scars and the monocles and the swastikas all over the place. History has proved a lot of that to be different. I was looking for something more realistic. That's what I was trying to write, but this was still 1965, 1966 and no way in hell could I have sympathetic Germans in a recurring series. So I decided to have an American army officer of German descent who would be falsely accused of a battlefield murder of a general's son. He winds up a fugitive taking refuge in the Afrika Korps!

He knows he's innocent of the murder and he's able to escape after he's been convicted of the murder. In order to survive and get something to eat and drink (he's in the Tunisian Desert, remember) he changes uniforms with a dead German, gets in with a bunch of stragglers and all of

a sudden, *Poof!* he's in the Afrika Korps. Soon he finds himself in battle and he comes to realize that these German soldiers are a lot like his own side. Which, of course, makes his ordeal in the war even more heartbreaking. When he eventually does get away from the Korps, he still can't go back to his own people. He spends the war in a no-man's-land. Killing when he has to kill because, above all, he has to survive. I'm told that series is what people remember me most for.

It started out purely on a whim. One of the few times I got irritated with Sam was when he was telling me, "Willi, you can't have these Germans being good guys! You can't do it!" It bugged me so I said, "I'll put an American in the German Army." Apparently Charlton liked the idea. It was novel. It was different. That's what Dick and Charlton were looking for at the time. The first Willy Schultz story I wrote, I didn't even plot it out. I just went from panel to panel, writing it out longhand. I didn't even have a typewriter at the time. I don't know how the hell it worked out as it did but, again, they liked it. I just kept trying to meet my responsibility as a writer, to give the editor what he liked and what he can use and what he feels will sell but, in the same regard, maintain my own convictions, my own view of humanity, my own view of war.

It was an interesting time. Due to my health, I couldn't attend regular high school. Here in New York City they had the New York Board of Education High School of the Air. They had a woman teacher on the radio and you'd do different types of composition work, and she wanted everyone to do one on "My Special Day." I thought this was high school, not kindergarten, so I wrote up the day I saw one of my books on the newsstand. It was the first one, with the story "The Sniper" in it. I sent off the composition to her and the next week I'm listening to her. She's reading stuff about what I did on my summer vacation and la, la, la. Finally she's at the end of it and she says, "Well, this young man certainly does have an imagination." She didn't want to read it because she figured I was feeding her a line of bull. So she just dismissed it. So I sent her a very firm letter with a bunch of my books and the next week she's on the radio apologizing profusely! She read the composition and invited me to come on the radio and talk about my work. Of course, when I got there I could hardly speak. She'd ask me how I started writing a story and I'd start to tell her, then she'd interrupt and give her own opinion. So most of the interview has me saying "Yes. Yes. Yes." [*laughs*] I sounded like Lloyd Bridges. That's how Lloyd Bridges did interviews at that time—"Uh-hmm. Yes. Uh-hmm." For me, it was basically, "Thank you very much. I wasted my car fare." Nobody ever believed that I was doing what I was doing. To tell the truth, I have a hard time believing that I worked for Charlton at such a young age.

Richard: *Do you remember what Charlton paid you?*

Will: Charlton paid me $4 a page and then they upgraded it to $4.50. It was probably the bottom of the barrel for them.

Richard: *It was better than Warren. They were paying $25 per story in those days, regardless of length.*

Will: Well, however, you look at it, it was tough. I don't know what Joe Gill was being paid, I doubt he was getting

A SECOND BURST WAS FIRED INTO THE BUNKER, THIS TIME, MUCH CLOSER TO HIM. A THIRD BLAST FROM THE FLAMETHROWER'S NOZZLE AND HOMMEL WOULD SURELY BE HIT...HE TRIED TO CALL OUT TO THE AMERICANS...BUT COULDN'T. THEY PROBABLY WOULDN'T HEAR HIM...
WHOOSHH
HOMMEL'S WOUNDS DIDN'T HURT HIM ANYMORE...HE LAY THERE, WAITING FOR THE THIRD BLAST FROM THE FLAMETHROWER, JUST THINKING OF CLAIRE. HE WAS PICTURING HOW BEAUTIFUL SHE WOULD LOOK WITH HER NEW DRESS...AND HER HAIR BACK...
...WHEN THE THIRD BLAST CAME...
WHOOSHH!
SOON, EVERYTHING INSIDE OF THE BUNKER WAS ENGULFED IN FLAME. THE AMERICANS MOVED ON.
25

Script page 25 of the book-length "D-Day," in ***D-Day*** #5 (Oct. 1967), illustrated by Bill Montes and Ernie Bache. Story and script scan courtesy of and © 2015 Will Franz.

D-DAY #5
WILL FRANZ

1) A second blast comes into the bunker, this time, much closer to Paul Hommel.

CAPTION: A second burst was fired into the bunker this time, much closer to him. A third blast from the flamethrower's nosel and Hommel would surely be hit.He tried to call out to the Americans...but couldn't. They probably wouldn't hear him...and even if they did...they no doubt would kill him, anyway.

2) Close-up of Hommel. He has a calm and pleased expression on his face. The flames are much closer. He isn't even thinking of them.

CAPTION: Hommel's wounds didn't hurt him anymore...even Krenner's bullet in his intestines. He lay there, waiting for the third blast from the flamethrower, just thinking of Claire. He was picturing how beautiful she would look with her new dress...and her hair back...

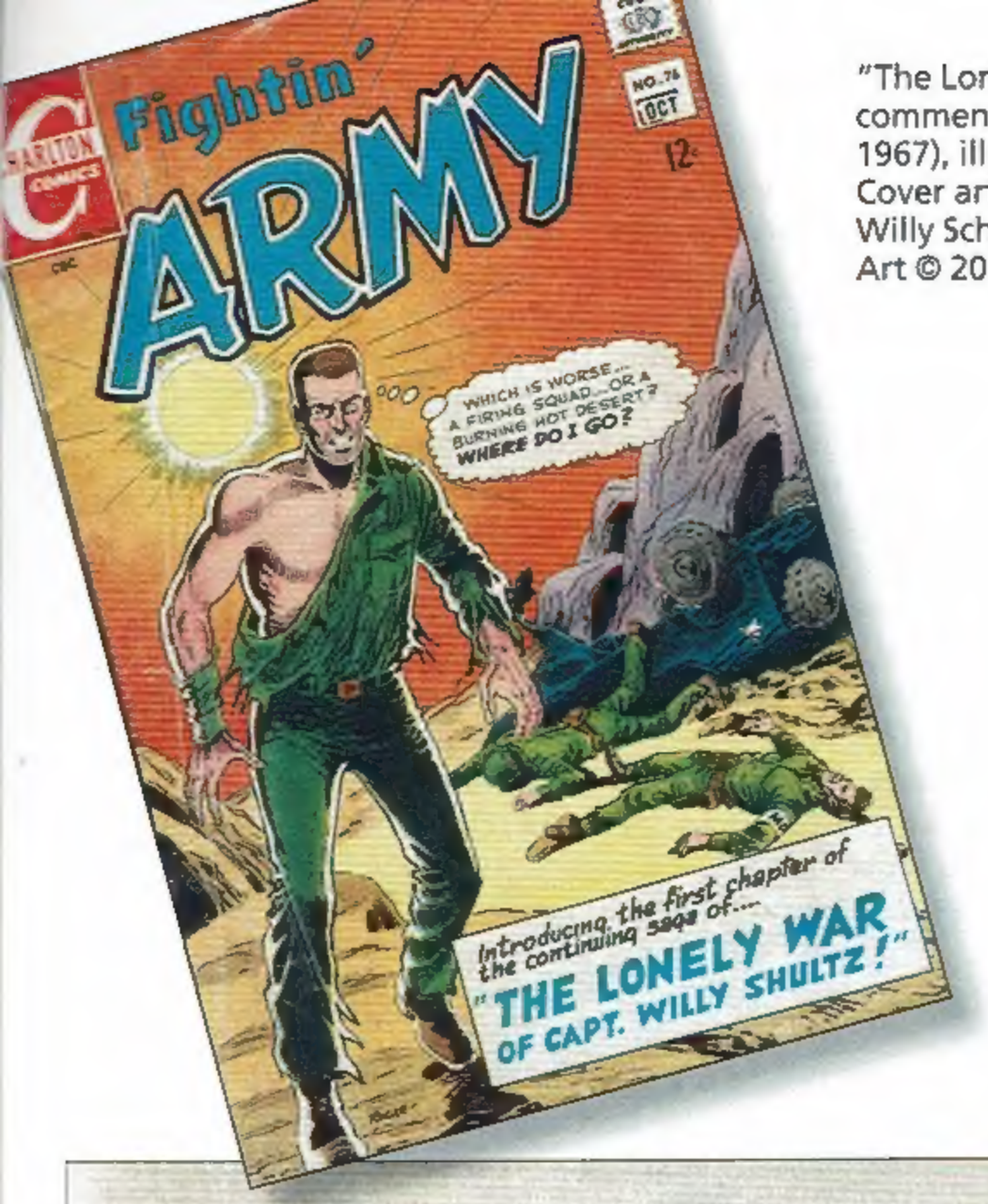
3) Looking out of the bunker, the GI named Mancuso fires the third blast into the bunker.

CAPTION:...When the third blast came.

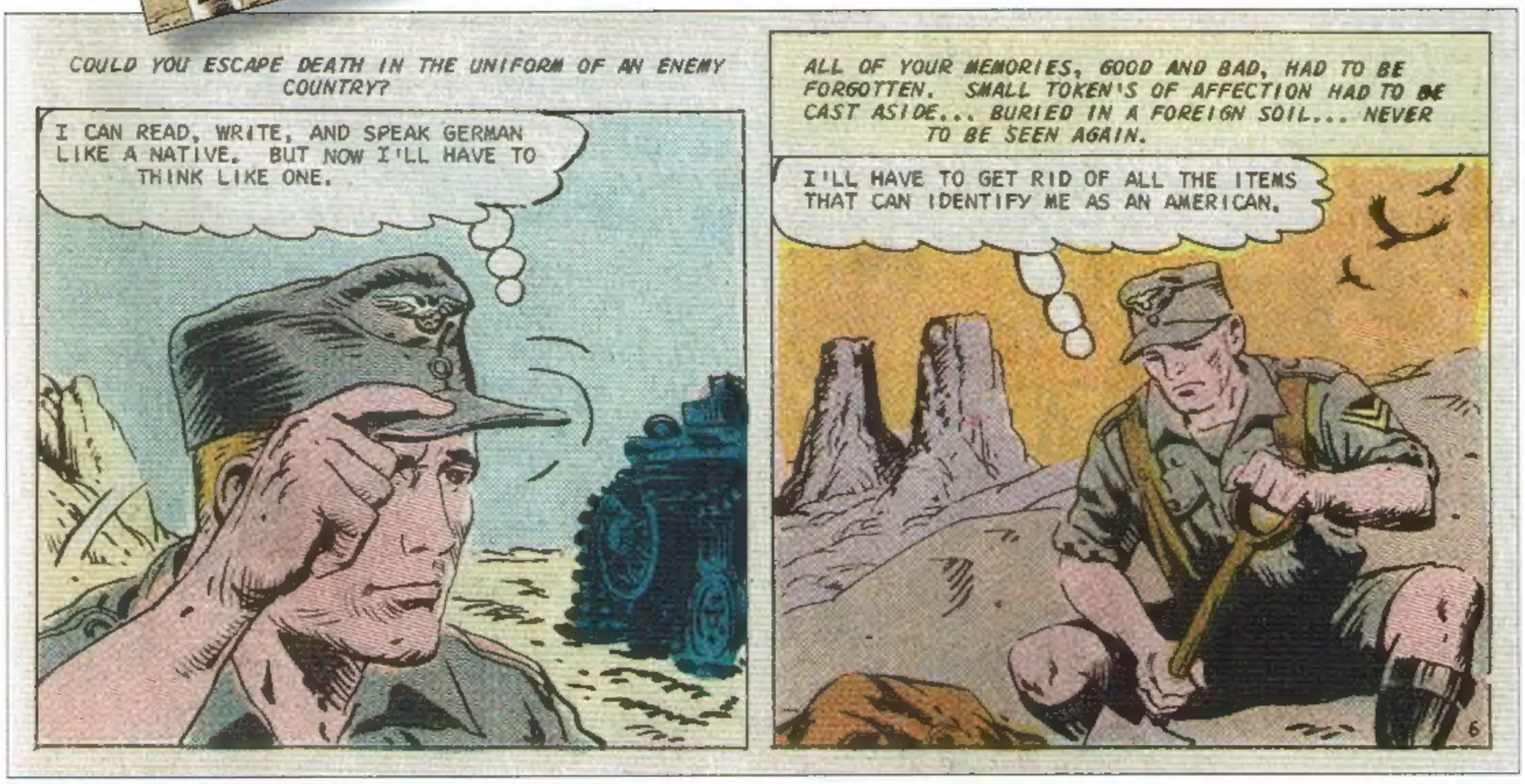
4) The Americans moving away from the bunker, flame coming out of the view slits and gaping hole.

CAPTION: Soon, everything inside of the bunker was engulfed in flame. The Americans moved on.

(25)


CHARLTON COMICS
Fightin' ARMY
NO. 76
OCT
12¢
WHICH IS WORSE... A FIRING SQUAD...OR A BURNING HOT DESERT? WHERE DO I GO?
Introducing the first chapter of the continuing saga of...
"THE LONELY WAR OF CAPT. WILLY SHULTZ!"

"The Lonely War of Capt. Willy Schultz" commenced in ***Fightin' Army*** #76 (Oct. 1967), illustrated by Sam Glanzman. Cover art by Rocke Mastroserio. Capt. Willy Schultz TM & © 2015 Will Franz. Art © 2015 Sam Glanzman.


COULD YOU ESCAPE DEATH IN THE UNIFORM OF AN ENEMY COUNTRY?
I CAN READ, WRITE, AND SPEAK GERMAN LIKE A NATIVE. BUT NOW I'LL HAVE TO THINK LIKE ONE.
ALL OF YOUR MEMORIES, GOOD AND BAD, HAD TO BE FORGOTTEN. SMALL TOKEN'S OF AFFECTION HAD TO BE CAST ASIDE... BURIED IN A FOREIGN SOIL... NEVER TO BE SEEN AGAIN.
I'LL HAVE TO GET RID OF ALL THE ITEMS THAT CAN IDENTIFY ME AS AN AMERICAN.
6

that little, but certainly one of the reasons he cranked out so much material was that the pay was not that great. One thing Sam always said about Charlton was that it was on-the-job training. More work, more work, more work and he kept cranking it out. For me, Charlton was good because they didn't mess with you much. There were some errors, some almost unforgivable oversights and editorial interference, but for the most part they left me alone to write what I wanted within the confines of what they could publish.

The Vietnam era, like nowadays, was a very difficult time to do war comics because you were getting criticized from all sides. If you were too critical of "our side" you were un-American or you loved the enemy or you were a peacenik or whatever . . . everyone had a name for you. All I was trying to do was write a story. I'd never been in the military. Due to illness, I was 4-F. I had never been in combat, naturally, but I was told, years ago by a medical counselor, that with the diabetes I have, with my fragile health . . . that I understood conflict. I understood futility. I was able to project myself into that type of fear. I heard from men who had witnessed war, who had experienced war, who thought that I had experienced it also. Which for me was kind of a scary compliment.

I used to ask myself, Where does this story approach come from? I hear from a lot of writers, at least lately, that they don't feel that they actually create as much as re-create their memories. Rather than create, they seem to remember. When my characters start talking it's like I'm remembering a conversation they had from last night. Nowadays I teach creative writing at a local disability center. I've made all sorts of notes on techniques that I use to deal with stuff like writer's block. I compare writing a story to the way Sam Glanzman would do a drawing. You know, you've got a tree. OK, what goes with the tree? What type of terrain? Where's the sun? What kind of shadow does it get? Same thing with writing. I've got a character. How's he dressed? Blue collar? White collar? Where is he? City? Country? And if the writer starts building a human being, suddenly they start talking to you. They have a history unfolding for you. Maybe that's just me. Maybe I'm screwy. I don't know, but it works for me. It's one of the techniques I use and the people I bring that out to wind up coming to me afterwards and saying, "You know, Will, that approach works. Thanks."

The memory type of writing does get a little disconcerting, though. Especially when you're trying to get to sleep at night. [*chuckles*] You start thinking "Wait! Wait! I've got to get this down! I've got to write it down!" and the batteries aren't working in the tape recorder and it never really works when you try to dictate it into a tape recorder anyways. With me, I have to write it down. I have numerous legal pads, all over the place. And it's "this pen doesn't work, that pen doesn't work, oh, this one does" and I scribble something down and the next morning I try to read what I wrote and I can't read my own handwriting! I plotted out a whole story in my sleep one night. It had to do with an American in the Old West, a settler's wagon, an Indian woman and many pots and pans. I can't remember exactly how the story went now but I'd wake up and look at my pad and it'd be my handwriting! I don't remember doing it. They say we only use a small percentage of our brain on a regular basis, something like 10%. I think creative writing goes on subconsciously in the other 90%.

People talk about past lives. They're always telling me, "Oh, you've lived before. You've lost your eyesight in an earlier life due to an evil insurrection . . ." You know, this is me saying "OK, fine. Thank you very much" and putting a little distance between me and them. But I guess we just don't

know what is going on. We don't know where the ideas come from. We really don't know if we've lived before. If this is all there is. We just don't know. The best stuff comes from nowhere. It's like someone's out there whispering in your ear. "This is what you need to get down. Don't wait. Get it down right now! If you don't get it down now you're going to regret it."

I've been working on novels. One of them, *The Mailed Fist*, was originally going to be a graphic novel, a project for me and Sam. We had some creative differences. Sam's far too dear to me to risk having any hard feelings come between us. This novel is very important to me so I thought I should just withdraw it as a graphic novel, and I've been working on it as a prose novel.

The other is called *Quest*. It's a medieval story that follows an idealistic knight who begins to realize the hypocrisy of chivalry. My brother-in-law read it and told me it was really good but really dark. There weren't any moments of light in it. I said, "Good, that's just what I intended." Neither novel is finished. *Quest* has a first draft but needs a rewrite. I realized after finishing the rough draft that I put too much detail in on things like what type of armor they were wearing. An artist might need that detail but the reader doesn't. *The Mailed Fist* has four finished chapters. My health and my everyday work make it difficult to find the kind of extended time I need to finish them, though. I haven't done anything on them recently.

Richard: *Well, I hope you get back to it. Just regard them as works in progress.*

Will: Yeah, I will. The characters are a little too forceful for me to keep them shut up. Everything's already been copyrighted. I've done all the legal stuff for that. It's just a matter of sitting down and getting to the business of writing. For a while, it's been more, "Where am I going to get the money to pay the bills?"

Richard: *All three of your Charlton comic book serials pretty much started at the same time. Can you tell us about them?*

Will: First, you have to understand that "Willy Schultz" was a compromise for what I really wanted to do. His original name was August Kruger. He was going to be Gus Kruger to the Americans and August Kruger to the Germans. But Sam said, "What kind of a name is that? Call him Willy Battle or something!" It was Sam on one of his cantankerous days. I was like 15, 16 years old or whatever and I was getting a little steamed. So I said, "I'll call him Willy Schultz." And it stuck! I'm told that people liked it because it was an everyman's name. So, great! I'm not going to argue with success.

Richard: *They were right and, of course, Schultz and you share a first name.*

Will: I didn't even look at it that way. I gave him the name Willy because that's what Sam said. I made him Aryan looking. He was going to be German and blond and so on.

Now as for "The Iron Corporal" series, which ran in *Army War Heroes*—when I was little I had seen a really interesting little play on film called *The Long and the Short and the Tall* with Laurence Harvey, Richard Todd, Richard Harris, and David McCallum and a whole bunch of British character actors. The film took place in Burma. It was an unrealistic film but I loved their hats! [*laughs*] The movie's been rereleased as *Jungle Fighters* but the print's in such poor condition that before AMC went commercial they only played it once. The print was very faded out. I have it here on VHS somewhere. But something in it appealed to me. Guys firing tommy guns and wearing bush hats like that! I thought they were Australians, I didn't know they were British. So for another serial, I thought, "Well, nobody's ever really done anything about the Australians." Plus, I loved that Dell *Combat* issue [#8A, June 1963] that Sam had done on New Guinea. I decided that I would do a war serial about Australians in New Guinea. It would be perfect for Sam to draw because he'd done the *Combat* issue so beautifully. But, of course, Charlton said I had to make the main character, Ian Heath, an American. So, OK, he'll be an American volunteer. Then they said, "We've got to give him a gimmick!" I said, "What do you mean, give him a gimmick?" Sam says, "He's the Iron Corporal, give him iron ribs or something!"

Richard: *I was going to ask you about those iron ribs because you mention them in exactly two stories. His origin tale (the second episode) where a Japanese knife shatters when he's stabbed in the side and, very briefly, in a much later story where you establish that the Iron Corporal can't swim because his iron ribs make him too heavy to float! You never mentioned them anywhere else. He's got iron ribs and he sinks to the bottom of a river. [laughs]*

Will: Oh, I hated it! Technically, it was a brace because he always wore a black T-shirt. He actually wore a brace underneath the shirt. He was from a wealthy family. His father was an industrialist who designed this lightweight rig that was like body armor, damn near. He could move because it was flexible. But, boy, I wanted to ignore that as much as possible. I put my girlfriend of the time, Arlene, in his origin story too. Remember, I was just shooting from the hip. I had to get ten pages out, please!

Will Franz in Brooklyn, 1969. Photo courtesy of and © 2015 Will Franz.

I LEFT EARL BOSWELL AND THE GROUP BEHIND TO FINISH OFF THE 15th JAP GUN CREW WHEN I SAW THE JAP REINFORCEMENTS COME RACING TOWARDS US. THEY WERE NO DOUBT HOPING TO RELIEVE SOME OF THE AUSSIE PRESSURE ON THEIR COMRADES. I LOADED A FRESH MAGAZINE INTO MY STEN GUN AND FIRED INTO THE MOB. THESE SCREAMING JAPS AS LONG AS THEY KEPT COMING...I KEPT FIRING. IT WAS NO TIME TO THINK OF WEAPONS, THEY LOOKED MORE LIKE SOME SAVAGE ALIEN CREATURES WEARING UNIFORMS. IT WAS FRIGHTENING TO FACE AN ENEMY AS FANATIC AS THESE... BUT I HELD MY GROUND AND KEPT FIRING AWAY. IF I DIDN'T ... I COULDN'T RETAIN THE NAME OF... IAN HEATH...
Introducing
"THE IRON CORPORAL!"
STORY-WILL FRANZ
ART S·J·G
A LITTLE LESS THAN AN HOUR BEFORE I HAD BEEN IN A LANDING BARGE HEADED FOR THIS PARTICULAR SPOT. THIS PARTICULAR BEACH...

Debut of the Iron Corporal in ***Army War Heroes*** #22 (Nov. 1967). The Iron Corporal TM & © 2015 Will Franz. Art © 2015 Sam Glanzman.

Richard: *You also only mentioned that he was an American in that one origin story. You never mentioned it again. If anybody missed that story, he was an Australian bloke, just like the rest of his squad.*

Will: Nope, I never mentioned it again. That was my compromise. I did it their way to get the story going. If Dick or Sal Gentile had ever mentioned it again, I would have followed their instructions, but they never did. So I just went on my merry way and after a bit I found myself turning "The Iron Corporal" into more of an ensemble piece where sometimes Ian Heath was way in the background and I'd be dealing with the Bren gun crew. By the way, the character with the big mustache, Bruce? He was a real guy. I went to a military research company in lower Manhattan called ZM Military Research. I don't remember his last name, but Bruce worked there. A big, easygoing guy, but loud! He had that big, waxed mustache. Once he let me take photographs of him because I thought he'd make a great character for a comic book. Bruce was a real inspiration for a character. His terminology and way of speaking were perfect. Sometimes I think that people liked my work as much as they did because I really worked at getting real people into it. I didn't want my characters to be Hollywood.

I had gotten so much of my military research from Bruce's small company—I had books on the German tanks that were in German. This was way before the onslaught of military research books that came out in the 1970s and '80s. I knew a lot of things that the average writer and the average reader didn't know. One time I gave Joe Kubert a book on German military insignia. I gave it to him because I love Joe's work, but I hated the way he did German uniforms and weapons. I had this booklet of insignia and he used it a couple of times. I don't know what became of it afterward.

One of my favorite films is *The Alamo*, the most recent one, with Billy Bob Thornton. Great film with flawed heroes. Face it, what's likable about Jim Bowie? Not much. He was a land grabber, crooked, and killed people at the drop of a hat. But he loved his wife. That was something that I remembered about him from when I was small. I read a book about him by Robert Penn Warren, and it got to me how Bowie was in mourning over the death of his wife and, in Warren's book, his wife was a goddaughter of Santa Anna.

Richard: *One of the things I liked about that movie was that they had Crockett survive the battle, because that's what the Mexican diaries of the time said. Actually they said four men survived the battle, including Crockett. And the dialogue they gave Thornton in the movie is pretty accurate to the Mexican accounts. According to those accounts the Mexican general did insist that Crockett formally surrender, and Crockett supposedly replied that he'd be glad to accept Santa Anna's surrender, whereupon Santa Anna ordered all four men put to death by bayonet. The Mexican officer who wrote that down seemed very impressed by Crockett's last moments.*

Will: I loved the way the doomed Davy Crockett sees a Mexican soldier wearing the coonskin hat and blurts out "Davy Crockett!" Crockett's scared out of his wits, until he's reminded that he's who everyone is watching. And I loved that Crockett's last lines in the movie, "I'm a screamer!" were the first words that the actor playing Crockett on stage at the start of the movie says. I love that kind of writing, that it comes full circle, plus the fact that these men were supposedly heroes. Hmmm. Actually they would rather not have been there. These were real, believable

men and portrayed by excellent actors. Billy Bob Thornton and Jason Patric were both great.

I've always tried to make my characters believable. I look back on some of my old stories and say "Jeez, this stinks!" Joe Gill was better at constructing a story than I was. I admire his ability to produce a plot. It was like a chess game—opening game, middle game, endgame. That's his stories. Mine kind of meander sometimes. But I think what worked was that readers would tell me they loved my characters.

Richard: *One of the things that struck me about your writing is that it reminded me of Harvey Kurtzman's work on* Two-Fisted Tales *and* Frontline Combat. *You and Kurtzman don't really write anything alike but I thought there was a sensibility in his work, and also on Archie Goodwin's work in* Blazing Combat, *that was similar to the sensibility in your own work. It's fairly rare in war comics. They tend to be either very gung ho or extremely cynical in a rather heartless way. Kurtzman and Goodwin and your work seemed to have something more than the typical story. Passion. Since your work I've only really seen this type of writing from Glanzman himself on his own feature,* "U.S.S. Stevens," *which was done after Schultz and the Iron Corporal, and from the recent work by Grant Morrison on* Battlefields *or his earlier* War Stories. *Wayne Vansant's work on* Katusha *and Pat Mills's* Charley's War *are also in that vein.*

Will: Well, when I started writing I knew very little about either Kurtzman or Goodwin. That kind of stuff wasn't permitted in my house. My father was, "Why are you bringing that stuff in the house?"

Richard: *One of the things I remembered about Goodwin's* Blazing Combat *title was that his work was banned, not by readers but by distributors. The reason, or one of the reasons, they had to cancel* Blazing Combat *was that the Army threatened to ban Warren magazines from the PXs because* Blazing Combat *was considered so anti-war that the army thought it would give soldiers the wrong idea.*

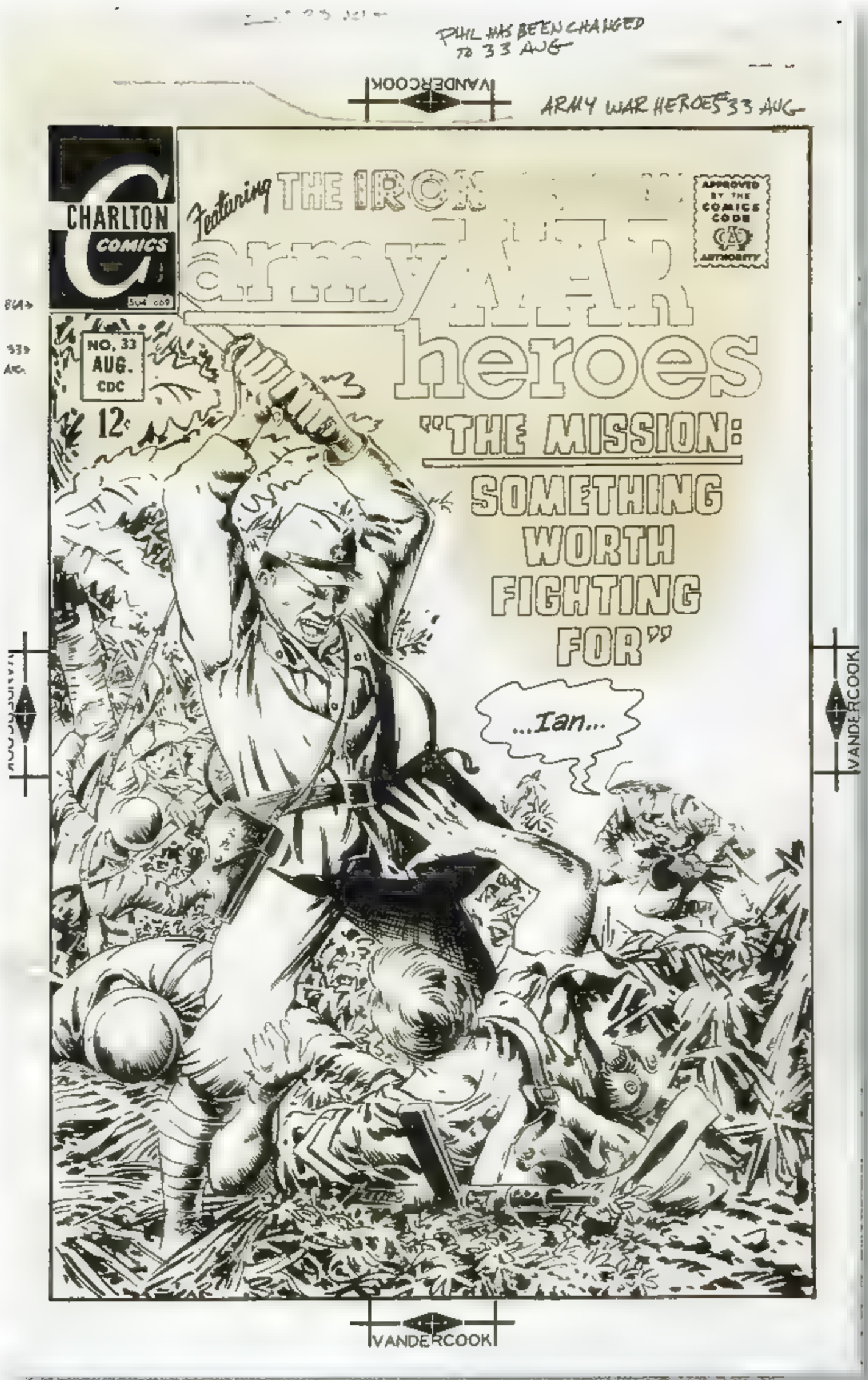
Will: Again, I wouldn't know about that but it wouldn't surprise me. I was told a lot of Charlton sales were on military bases. They were a staple on Army bases. I, and my stories, were dropped in 1969, out of the blue. Things were heating up in Vietnam. This was after Tet [***Ed. note:*** *a major North Vietnamese / Viet Cong offensive in 1968*] and the real draft was started. The army wasn't as "professional" as it had been. I was blacklisted at Charlton because a guy had put my name and stories down as one of the reasons he registered as a conscientious objector. I found out other people were throwing my name around. Someone in the army apparently said that my stuff, maybe like Goodwin's stuff, was too blood and guts. It was going to make soldiers *not* want to kill the gooks. The army can't have that!

Richard: *Jim Warren made it clear that a major blockade to the success of* Blazing Combat *was the American Legion. The American Legion didn't like the book and many of the magazine distributors were Legionnaires. One thing that the EC war comics and* Blazing Combat *and your material all had in common, besides a passionate viewpoint, was that they all experienced some form of censorship due to content. I suspect that one of the reasons you got away with those types of stories for three years at Charlton was that, while your editors certainly read the stuff, I don't think the Charlton publishers ever read any comic that they published. When your name came up in regard to opposition to the war, that's when they probably finally looked at it, got upset, and canceled the strips.*

Will: It's funny. I'd done a one-shot story, actually a whole bunch of them, and one was about a tank. It was called "The Reward or 72 Tons of Terror." Now I didn't know that you couldn't use "terror" in a title due to Comics Code restrictions, so the title was changed to "72 Tons of Steel." It was based on an actual thing that happened to a neighbor of mine. He and his buddies were driving in a small truck through the mountains, near the end of the war, and they drive around a curve and there's a freaking German tank right in the middle of the road, looking right at them! They were looking right down the barrel of a Tiger tank. They got out of the truck and ran. Nothing happened. The tank had been abandoned. They figured that the German tank crew had left it in the road as a weird, cruel joke. It almost gave these Americans a heart attack. [*laughs*]

Top: Debut story of the "Devil's Brigade" series, from ***War Heroes*** #27 (Nov. 1967), illustrated by Sam Glanzman. ***Bottom:*** First page of "A Course in Murder," scripted by Joe Gill, penciled by Will, and inked by Sam Glanzman, from ***Army War Heroes*** #36 (Feb. 1970). The Devil's Brigade TM & © 2015 Will Franz. Art © 2015 Sam Glanzman.

Anyway, at one point in my story I had some Americans surrendering to the Germans, and I had them saying "Nicht Schiessen. Nicht Schiessen"—"Don't shoot. Don't shoot." Only I transposed the *I* and the *E* and in the comic



Dramatic cover by Sam Glanzman for ***Army War Heroes*** #33 (Aug. 1969). Scan of original art courtesy of Heritage Auctions, www.ha.com. The Iron Corporal TM & © 2015 Will Franz. Art © 2015 Sam Glanzman.

it appeared as "Nicht Scheissen," which means "Don't shit." [*laughs*] Sal Gentile was the editor and it was his job to catch grammatical errors. But this was in German. He didn't speak German. I didn't speak German. I used phrasebooks. I had military phrasebooks that the US servicemen got back then with phrases in German and Italian and what not. I'd made a typographical error. I thought to myself, "Oh, Jeez! These things are distributed to Army bases all over the world!" I told Sal Gentile over the phone and he started to laugh his ass off. He thought that was funny! I thought I was going to get in all kinds of trouble. I guess the Germans in the story were too busy laughing at the GIs' pleas and concerns for the Germans' bowel movements to actually shoot the GIs as they surrendered. [*laughs*]

There's a little-known but quite beautiful Robert De Niro film called *The Mission*. It's set in South America, and in the film they were using a local South American tribe to portray another 18th-century tribe. Now this tribe in the movie had apparently never seen white men before and, of course, very few white men knew their language, so the director, Roland Joffé, told the tribe to say anything they wanted. So I guess the rumor goes that these natives were cursing up a storm but nobody knew what they were saying!

Richard: *So it was the same thing as saying clean language. If nobody knows what you're saying then it doesn't matter one way or the other.*

Will: Yeah! Like any writer, I write what I like to read. I like character stories more than plot. I like Groucho Marx's books—*Memoirs of a Mangy Lover*, etc. Reading his books is like sitting down and chatting with an old friend. You've got to know his humor. If you just read it you'd realize that what's written isn't all that funny, but it sure is interesting. The way he wrote and the way he portrayed what he had done. It's not a laugh riot, but I'm sure glad I read it and I'll be happy to read it again and recommend it to my friends. That's the effect I'd like to have with my writing. Someone to read it and say, "Boy, I'm glad I read that!" Every movie I like, every book I like, that's my reaction. Action for the sake of action, horror for the sake of horror, does nothing for me. I want to care about the people, the men and women in the story. If I care about them, I want them to have a happily-ever-after, somehow, somewhere, even if that's not how the story ends.

In "The Devil's Brigade," that storyline was strung together. It was done really quickly because they needed a new series right away. I liked the look of the British Centurion tank and used that as a main part of the story. Some months later I learned that the Centurion didn't actually come out until 1947, and I had it in action in North Africa! I also referred to Rommel as a Field Marshal when at the time he was only a general. "The Devil's Brigade" was my writing at its worst. I was cranking it out.

Richard: *I thought the initial story, which was in two parts, actually was OK, but after it was done there didn't seem to be any reason why this part-British, part-American tank command, which had only come together of necessity in a battle, would have any reason to stay together. The Americans would go back to an American unit and the Brits would go back to a British unit. The British commander, who had lost so many tanks, would probably get a desk job somewhere.*

Will: Part of that was a typo of mine in that initial story. The British tank commander should have lost 50 tanks, not 500. I was airing out some problems I had about British Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery and his triumph in North Africa. When Montgomery finally won in North Af-

rica he had over 500 armored fighting vehicles. The entire Afrika Korps had 32, with very little supplies. The British had the Enigma code, which allowed them to intercept German shipments of supplies in the Mediterranean. I've never really understood why Montgomery could claim such a great victory when he overwhelmed the German Army with larger numbers and more materiel and not by his fighting ability. Montgomery was a . . . well, I don't want to say it.

Richard: *Well, he was known to be jealous and very much a glory hound.*

Will: The first time I ever read about Operation Market Garden [***Ed note:*** *a disastrous Allied attempt to bypass Germany's Siegfried Line defenses by going around them through Holland, headed by Montgomery*] in Cornelius Ryan's book *A Bridge Too Far*, I was flabbergasted. I'm no military strategist, but even I know you don't make a plan that sends an armored column down one single road, a road that goes over five bridges over five major rivers and canals. The Dutch were astounded by it as well! There were two SS Panzer divisions in Holland! The British didn't pay any attention. Monty needed a victory. He wanted to show up Patton, who was a bitter rival. At one point Monty managed to slow up a Patton offensive by demanding and getting fuel that Patton needed to keep going. Now, Patton was no angel. But if Patton had been given his head in 1944 the Battle of the Bulge would probably have never happened and the battle of Berlin, the whole map of postwar Europe would have been different. British and American military political infighting during World War II did as much as the Soviet army to determine how the Cold War would be fought in the decades following the war.

But there was pressure from Stalin, from Churchill, etc. The whole firebombing of Dresden was at Churchill's orders to show the Russians what the Western allies were willing to do. They wiped out this city that had no military value. The second wave of bombers was timed to come in so that they would get the rescue and fire crews out in the open. Then they sent in strafing planes—Mustang P-51s—the next day with orders to shoot anything that moved. This was a terror raid, done to tell the Russians, "Don't get too ambitious about what you want out of Europe. Because this is what we're willing to do to you." The same basic principle was behind the bombings at Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The Russians had declared war on Japan and were trying to get as much territory as possible before the Japanese defeat. We couldn't let that happen. Yes, we could have blockaded Japan and starved them out but the Russians were planning a push down into China and so we hurried and dropped the big A. That's not what gets taught in the history books though.

Richard: *Not enough, that's for sure. I did have a question about the early episodes of Willy Schultz. You started writing one called "The Beginning of the End" and . . .*

Will: That wasn't my title. No way. That was a nightmare.

Richard: *It wasn't? It sort of seemed that you were intending to end the series and at the last minute you decided to keep it going.*

Will: Well, I wasn't trying to end it, just get him out of North Africa and into Europe. I got him out of Africa by having him captured and shipped to a German POW camp in Italy. I started the story out by having the American general who'd accused him of murder getting killed. Now the German who killed the general was based on a DJ on WMCA radio here in New York City. His name was Gary Stevens. He always wanted to be in a comic book. He was a great guy and one of the most popular DJs in New York at the time. My father worked there at WMCA as an engineer. WMCA was the biggest thing going in the audio media at that time. I visited my dad there and met Gary, who said he wanted to be in a comic book. So I used his real name, Grossman, and I made him a vicious officer. His sergeant was Wolfgang Burger. On the air, Gary had an imaginary buddy named Wooley Burger, like Soupy Sales had his imaginary friend, White Fang. So I had sold out for publicity but the thing was that *Fightin' Army*, where the Willy Schultz serial ran, had thousands of dollars of free publicity because one night Gary went and gave us a big plug on prime time New York radio. Charlton couldn't have paid for anything like that and Gary gave it to us for free because he was in the comic book. That's how that particular story got started, but I hated how that chapter ended.

Somebody edited Schultz's speech in the end of the story. While he was fighting he was sinking into despair. His thoughts were of home and Mom's apple pie and all the things he loved about America and he was

This shot of Will in September 1971 was taken "at the Manhattan insurance company where I worked as an accounting technician. My wall is covered with cartoons I made of various office friends and personnel." Photo courtesy of and © 2015 Will Franz.

beginning to realize that even if he lived he would probably never see them again. He didn't know what he was fighting for anymore. His speech was edited so that it was almost like he was being restored as he trekked into the desert, and in the original script it was far from that. That's why he wound up in the following episode agreeing to join a British commando squad in a raid behind enemy lines.

Richard: *That's another thing I wanted to ask you about. It seems like there's an episode missing at that point. Willy concludes his second and last encounter with the American general, then in the next issue of* Fightin' Army *he doesn't appear at all, and then when he returns he's in the middle of the raid with the commandos, with no explanation of how he got there.*

Will: There was a caption that was supposed to be on page one, panel one, that explained why he was there and once again in a German uniform.

Richard: *OK, at the end of the previous episode, he was wandering out into the desert in an American uniform, then he shows up on page one of the next one fighting alongside British commandos in a German uniform.*

Will: That explanation was supposed to appear in the caption, but the caption went missing! They actually moved the caption to the end of the chapter where it didn't make sense at all. You see, in that episode, the British went farther than they intended. They wiped out a hospital, by accident. Naturally, when the Germans captured them, the Germans decide they're going to line them up against a wall and shoot them. The final caption was supposed to be for the British commandos, and it said, "This is the end." Because it was the end for them, and then a second caption that was directed at Schultz that said, "as well as for you!" and it ended with Schultz staring at the firing squad. It was a cliff-hanger. But for some reason it was changed from a caption to dialogue coming from Shultz himself. Schultz says, "This is the end . . . as well as for you!" which made no sense! I always told them, "Look, if you're having any trouble with the scripts, because I might be getting controversial, then let me know." I never got any complaints about the scripts. Then I see the actual comic when I get my advance copy. I'm wondering what the hell is going on?

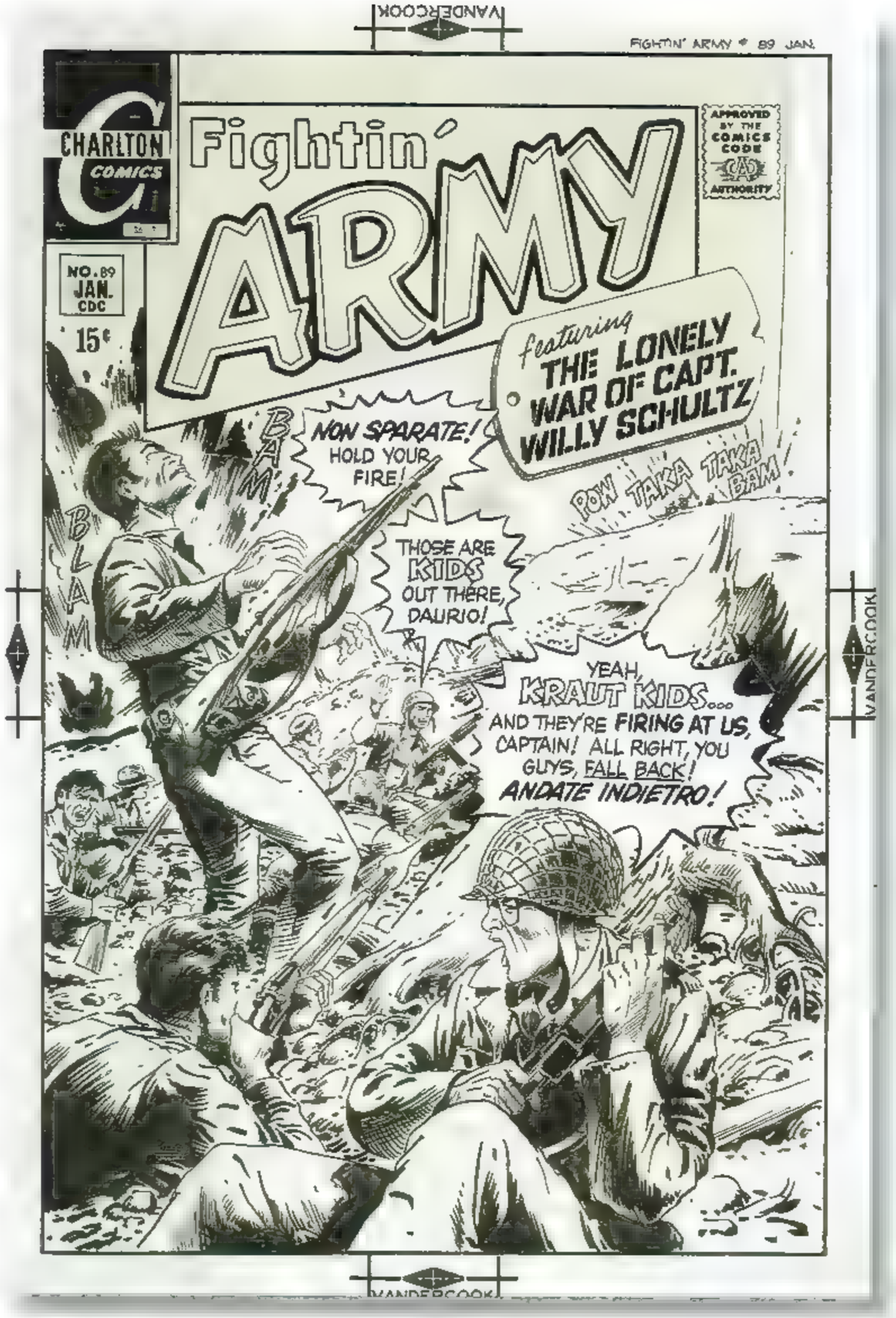
I APPROACHED THE SILENT OFFICER FROM THE REAR, PLACING MY GRIMY HAND ON HIS SAGGING SHOULDER
"JOHN ." WE'VE GOT THE CAMERA...JOHN..."
THE CAPTAIN WAS STARING AT A CRUDE WOODEN PLAQUE...WRITTEN IN ENGLISH. A MONUMENT TO SOMEONE THE PILOT OF THE DOWNED RAAF RECONNAISSANCE PLANE
HE TURNED TO ME . HIS PIERCING BLUE EYES DISPLAYING THE INTOLERABLE GRIEF AND ANGUISH HIDDEN DEEP INSIDE OF HIM
HE WAS MY BROTHER
BLAST .!
TEARS STREAKED DOWN MCPHILIPS' FACE AS HE SEIZED A PIECE OF SPLINTERED WOOD AND STARTED USING IT IN A SPADE-LIKE MANNER TO REMOVE THE DIRT FROM THE SHALLOW GRAVE. .
I WROTE THE INSCRIPTION ON THE PLAQUE IT WAS ONLY FITTING HE WAS A VERY BRAVE MAN WHO DIED ONLY AFTER EVERY LAST CARTRIDGE WAS SPENT FROM HIS REVOLVER AFTER DISCHARGING BOTH OF HIS HAND GRENADES. I

Richard: *Well, I'm looking at the actual comic right now and you're right, right above Schultz's dialogue is the intro caption that usually appears on page one. Instead of being in the first panel, it's been moved to the second to the last panel of the story. It seems very obvious that something is missing between the two chapters. In fact, when Roger Broughton reprinted those stories in the early 1990s, he included one page of text that attempted to explain what had happened between those episodes.*

Will: Really? I've never seen that. Can you Xerox off that page? He approached me in the early 1990s to complete the Willy Schultz story. I did write and complete Willy Shultz with the understanding that Sam would draw it. At the time I was legally blind and couldn't see a keyboard or a screen so it was all written out longhand. Broughton wanted filler pages as well as a tying up of Schultz's activities until the end of the war. When Sam read it he told me he didn't know if he could do it justice. It was very controlled

Opposite page: Grim final page of the Iron Corporal story "The Mission," from ***Army War Heroes*** #33 (Aug. 1969), along with Will's script-sketch of panel five. Says Will, "I would plot out pages as well as better indicate to Sam what I had in mind using such drawings." Sketch scan courtesy of and © 2015 Will Franz. The Iron Corporal TM & © 2015 Will Franz. Art © 2015 Sam Glanzman.

Right: Cover by Sam Glanzman for ***Fightin' Army*** #89 (Jan. 1970). Scan of partially restored original art courtesy of Heritage Auctions, www.ha.com. Capt. Willy Schultz TM & © 2015 Will Franz. Art © 2015 Sam Glanzman.


VANDERCOOK
FIGHTIN' ARMY # 89 JAN.
CHARLTON COMICS
Fightin' ARMY
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
NO. 89 JAN. CDC
15¢
featuring THE LONELY WAR OF CAPT. WILLY SCHULTZ
BAM
BLAM
NON SPARATE! HOLD YOUR FIRE!
POW TAKA TAKA BAM!
THOSE ARE KIDS OUT THERE, DAURIO!
YEAH, KRAUT KIDS... AND THEY'RE FIRING AT US, CAPTAIN! ALL RIGHT, YOU GUYS, FALL BACK! ANDATE INDIETRO!
VANDERCOOK

writing. It was very concise writing and it tied up Schultz's life all the way to the end of the war. I did put in the fillers between those two chapters. I didn't know what happened, if Broughton lost distribution rights or whatever, but the graphic novel never appeared.

Richard: *He didn't lose the distribution rights because he actually claimed to have bought the rights and ownership to a large chunk of the Charlton books, including all the war books. [**Ed. note:** Broughton's A+ or Avalon Comics ceased publication sometime in 2002 or 2003, and in recent years quite a number of stories that Broughton claimed ownership of have begun to appear in various collections from different publishers.]*

Will: Well, I wrote it but I never got any books from him. I never heard from him. I'm very disgusted because the few reprints that I've seen of his, which Sam lent me, had none of my corrections or filler material used. This was my opportunity to correct just the type of errors and omissions that you've been talking about and it was ignored.

Richard: *In fact, Broughton's rearranged some pages in the Schultz reprints, apparently to eliminate flashbacks. You sometimes started out stories with action, then had a brief flashback to explain how they got to that point. He rearranged the pages so the story was more linear. Didn't seem to help the story much though.*

Will: That was another thing! One of my favorite Schultz stories dealt with the idea of no escape from a situation. There was a Mark-IV tank blasting a farmhouse and he rearranged the panels! I wanted the story to have a certain meter, a certain progression. He even wanted me to have Schultz contemplating suicide at one time. I told him "Roger, no way. You know why? Schultz doesn't contemplate suicide because I don't contemplate suicide. The whole reason behind Schultz's story is that he's a survivor. He may not always be a pretty survivor but he survives."

Richard: *Wait, I just found the inserted text page. It's got a Sam Glanzman illo from one of the covers and it's bordered by barbed wire. It says (misspellings included),* "I tried to leave but I couldn't move a step. Was it fatigue or did I loose the will to survive? I didn't know and I didn't care. It was late and I crawled into the truck and went to sleep. Maybe when I woke up this nightmare would be gone. 3 hours later, I was surrounded by a group of British commandos. It was nice being with allies for a while until they handed me a German uniform and asked me to put it on. My stomach felt like it was wrapped in barb wire. I started to shake as I fell sitting in the sand. When will it stop I thought. When will it be enough. When will I die! The Brits handed me a cup and casually ask me to straighten out now. We didn't have time. We were leaving in an hour, after a spot of tea."

Will: I'm gonna hunt Broughton down. [*laughs*] Didn't Broughton put in anything about Schultz's dad? Broughton wanted me to write filler segments with Schultz writing letters home to his dad, which would have been hard since it was established in one of the earliest stories that Schultz was an orphan.

Richard: *The only real changes I see from the original appearances were the rearrangement of panels and pages. The dialogue seems to be identical. He also added a title to the third chapter, which originally didn't have one. He called it "Shoot Him! Shoot Him!" There's four Broughton issues altogether that reprint the first eleven chapters, about 110 pages. The reprints end with the chapter detailing a starving Schultz's escape, a la* The Fugitive, *from a bombed prison train.*

Will: See, that issue I've seen. In the early 1990s I wrote a filler chapter to put between the death of the general and the beginning of Schultz's involvement with the British commandos. He wanders off into the desert and suddenly finds himself surrounded by hostile Arabs. They thump Schultz good and stake him out in the sun. They didn't like the Anglos, whether they were Allied or Nazi, and they were going to start carving Schultz up. The British saved him from the Arabs and that's why he's willing to put on the German uniform again. That's what I wrote and when I find the storage box here in my loft I'll send you a copy of the finished story.

Richard: *I'd appreciate that.*

Will: I've been wanting to do it but my back is screwed up and lifting boxes is a no-no at the moment.

Once a fan started talking to me about Schultz's moodiness. I went "Well, wait a minute . . ."

Richard: *I wouldn't regard Schultz as moody. He despairs a lot of the time but that's a part of the storyline.*

Will: Yeah, but there are times when he'll just kill ya! The one story that I got some reaction to was the one where Schultz knifes the German in Italy for a crust of bread.

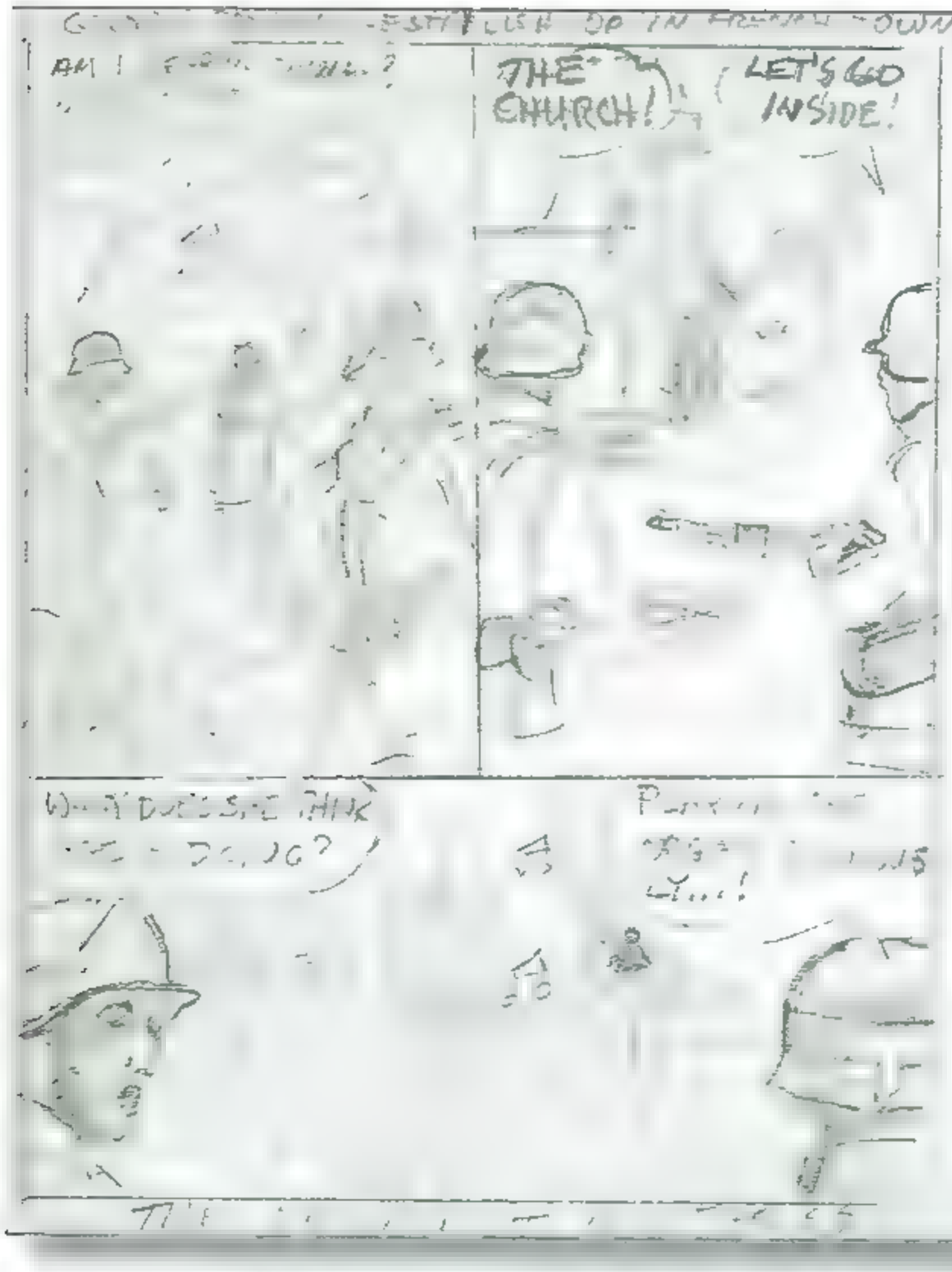
Richard: *That's the very first "Willy Schultz" story I read, back in 1969 when it first came out. I was 12 years old and that was a grim story. I remember being creeped out much more by that than by any other war or horror book that I was reading at the time. I didn't know about the EC or Warren books until the early to mid-1970s. It was a shock when I came across a reprint of one of the panels of that story while reading your interview in the Charlton issue of* Comic Book Artist *[#9, Aug. 2000]. I went back and started collecting all those Schultz and Iron Corporal stories and was very happy at how good they were, how well they hold up. But that story, where Willy kills the German for the bread and then Sam had Willy ripping away at the bread with his teeth, with bread crumbs and spit flying everywhere, was great stuff! It was pretty strong material for 1969, completely unlike anything that was being done in war comics at the time, such as Marvel's* Sgt. Fury and His Howling Commandos *or Sgt. Rock from DC's* Our Army at War.

FRANCE THE AUTUMN OF 1944
AM I HEARING THINGS..? WHERE'S THAT MUSIC COMING FROM?
THE CHURCH... LET'S GO INSIDE...
The Organist and the SS
D-3079
WHAT DOES SHE THINK SHE'S DOING...?
PLAYING THE ORGAN... OBVIOUSLY!

Will: I told Sam to draw that bread scene. That was the whole thing. Schultz turns and rams the bread in the dead German's mouth. When I wrote that scene it was my way of talking about Vietnam. Friends and acquaintances I had were running scared about the draft. One guy went so far as to tell me, "What do you care about it, Franz. You're 4-F. You've got nothing to worry about!" As though I couldn't have an opinion on it, as though I didn't have the right to have an opinion on it because I was safe from the draft. To me, the war was vicious and the government was forcing you to fight a war that wasn't being fought to save the world or our country but was needed by Winchester Arms and Bell Helicopters and Goodyear Rubber. And oil and tin mines and big business. It had nothing to do with the people of Vietnam, freedom loving or otherwise. But, to me, Schultz's starving was a way of showing the viciousness.

The way I intended to end Schultz's story was to have the partisans he was with, at the time of the serial's cancelation, wiped out. He would find himself back in a German uniform and getting shipped out to the Russian front where he fights the Russians for the remainder of the war. Remember, back then, in the late 1960s, it was OK to shoot Russians. His Italian partisan friends and he are trapped in a cave. One of them has to shoot another one because of terrible wounds. Everybody is killed except Schultz. He gets shipped off to a Russian POW camp. So when the war ends, Schultz is technically a traitor. He bore arms for an enemy nation. He can't go back to the States.

Before all of that, though, he meets up again with Ilsa, a German general's daughter that he'd met in North Africa. Her father and her husband had been involved in the July 20th plot to assassinate Hitler. They were executed and she is placed under arrest, a prisoner of the Gestapo. Schultz and his German squad had found them as refugees on a



This spread: Splash page of "The Organist and the SS," from ***Attack*** #8 (Nov. 1972), along with Will's script-sketches of the first two pages. Art by Leo Duranona. Story and sketch scan courtesy of and © 2015 Will Franz.

road and rescued her.

When the war finally ends he's released and finds himself at a crossroads. He's standing there in a German long coat, battered to hell, scars all over his face, and he's watching the American GIs driving down the road in trucks, laughing and jeering at him. There's an American MP who reminds him of Tiny, a German tank gunner he met in North Africa and who was, basically, burned to death. Schultz is just quiet. The American MP is chewing out the American soldiers who are jeering at him. The MP doesn't believe that you should ridicule any man who's seen combat like that. Especially by soldiers, replacement soldiers, who've never fired a shot in anger. He offers Schultz a cigarette and tells him to go home. Then Schultz looks up and, by chance, sees Wilkes, the US officer who gave false testimony against him during his drumhead court martial, sitting in a staff car. Now Wilkes was a Southern aristocrat who just didn't like Schultz and did what he did to Schultz just because he could. So Schultz cries out to him in German, not English, "I didn't murder him!" But Schultz doesn't know if he said it in English or German. Wilkes looks at him and doesn't recognize him! Then, not understanding him, Wilkes just shrugs and walks away. Schultz is just standing there, lost, and Ilsa walks over to him and tells him, "Come, let's go home." Schultz goes with her to start a new life, while Wilkes will be forever lost in his own hatred. There was no happy ending. There was no vindication. Hell, no! Even if he was cleared of the murder they'd still shoot him or hang him because he had fought in the German army.

That's what I wrote and Broughton never took advantage of it. He told me he loved the work but he kept wanting to change things.

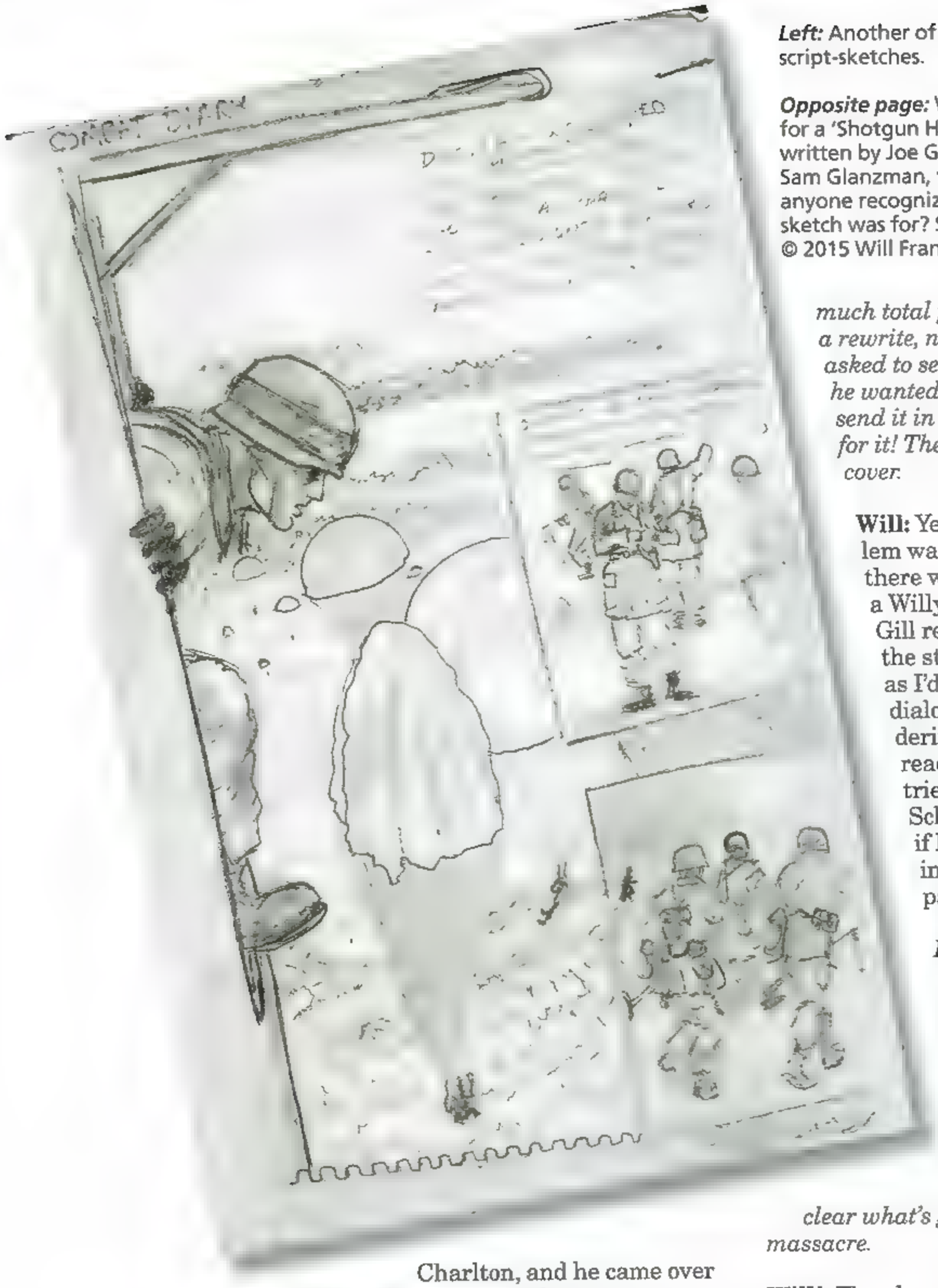
Richard: *A lot of the artists and writers who've talked to me have similar stories and complaints about unsympathetic editors. A bad editor often wants to rewrite your story with his ideas. A good editor is a guy who gets your story in print. Not his story, your story.*

Will: Yeah, in that regard, Dick Giordano was a great editor!

Richard: *I've heard the same thing repeatedly about Archie Goodwin and Louise Jones.*

Will: Unfortunately I never got to work with Archie. I spoke with him once or twice. I don't think he was editing at the time. After Charlton dropped me I had a hard time finding work. Joe Kubert bought a story from me called "Slave," which Russ Heath illustrated, but my name didn't appear on it [*Weird War Tales* #5, May-June 1972]. It was about an ancient Roman slave who cared for a hawk and who was crucified at the end of the story, although they couldn't use the word "crucified." Russ Heath draws beautifully but all these slaves in this story were supposed to be starving and Heath had them all looking like body builders! These were guys living on locusts and porridge, you know? Still, it was a really well-received story. Kubert, I believe, was a very gentle man. I really liked him. But when I went back to him for more work, suddenly he couldn't take anything more from me. Either the stories were too good or they weren't good enough. I noticed that my not-good-enough stories were often better than the stuff they were publishing, so I started to get a little suspicious. Not of him, I have nothing but good things to say about him and good memories of him, but I think he was getting pressure somehow, due to the times.

Back in 2000 I was at an Applecon here in the city. I saw George Wildman, the last editor I worked with at



Left: Another of Will's dynamic storyboard script-sketches.

Opposite page: Will says, "I did thumbnails for a 'Shotgun Harker & Chicken Smith' story, written by Joe Gill and with finished art by Sam Glanzman, for ***Fightin' Marines.***" Does anyone recognize what story and issue this sketch was for? Sketch scans courtesy of and © 2015 Will Franz.

Charlton, and he came over and seemed very happy to see me. I never had a problem with him and he always seemed to like my work. Still, the stories I sold him were also never credited with my name. He tells me he never had trouble with me. So I'm wondering who had trouble with me?

Richard: *Like I said earlier, I don't think it was the editors. I suspect your name came up somehow to the Charlton publishers and they finally, actually, looked at your stuff and thought it was subversive, compared to anything else they were publishing at the time.*

Will: To be honest, I was surprised it was getting printed when it *was* being printed.

Richard: *I've heard from several people that the Charlton publishers never read any of the comics that they published. The editors may have . . .*

Will: I'm not all that certain the editors did either. They were happy if you met your deadline so they could send it on out.

Richard: *Tom Sutton, in interviews from the 1970s, always mentioned that he had pretty much total freedom at Charlton. They never asked for a rewrite, never asked for art corrections, never even asked to see the pencils before you did the inking. If he wanted to paint a cover unsolicited, he'd paint it, send it in and they'd buy it. Even if they hadn't asked for it! Then they'd get a story done to go with the cover.*

Will: Yeah, the only time they usually had a problem was when they messed up in production. Still, there was one time when they had a problem with a Willy Schultz story called "The Partisans." Joe Gill rewrote the ending and ended up getting the story credit. The pictures were the same as I'd described to Sam but they'd changed the dialogue. My story had an Italian partisan murdering German prisoners. They changed it to read that a Nazi officer had a hidden luger and tried to make a run for it [*sarcastic tone*]. And Schultz is screaming in the printed version as if he were trying to stop the German, where in the original script he's trying to stop the partisans.

Richard: *Yeah, the caption says pretty much exactly that while the actual art has the Italian partisan holding a gun to the back of a kneeling German prisoner. There's really not much doubt as to what is actually going on. The partisans are vengeful and massacre their German prisoners over Schultz's protests. The captions are changed just enough to blur that. If you read the dialogue it's clear what's going on but the captions try to mask the massacre.*

Willi: They have Jon Daurio, an American liaison with the partisans, talking like he's some kind of ignorant peasant using a stilted, formal and, frankly, ridiculous manner of speech. What the hell?! Plus, they made the female Italian partisan a blonde! I wanted her to have black hair. I already had a blonde, Ilsa, in the story. By making her a blonde she looked just like Ilsa! I gave detailed descriptions that were just ignored. They changed or cut a lot of dialogue. I was on the phone to Sal Gentile for over an hour. I knew the story was going to be controversial so I'd turned it in way ahead of time, so if there were any changes that needed to be done they could happen. In the original draft, I had Cabrara, one of the partisans, collecting ears, but that got cut. That was OK, I cut it but I didn't have anything to do with the rewriting of "The Partisans." Then they even credited it to Joe Gill! All he did was rewrite the last three pages. The first seven are all mine.

Now, understand that I liked Joe Gill. I met Joe at a convention a few years back. Joe was a hoot! You can learn so much from him! At first, at the convention, he ignored me. "Willi's a dove!" he'd say. He was talking with Sam Glanzman 'cause Sam knew him. I was in the middle won-

dering what the hell was going on here? I mean I'm over fifty years old. I really don't feel like taking this crap. Then we were interviewed on the radio. It was a war panel and I mentioned something about Vietnam. I was getting tired of hearing that the Vietnam generation weren't pro-American enough or whatever. I said that my generation would have fought against Hitler and Tojo and the rest of them. We just didn't want to be the Hessians in Vietnam. All of a sudden, Joe Gill looked at me and he must have agreed with me because he put his arm around me. I've got it on tape, even. He then tells everybody that he was jealous of me and the way that I wrote.

Richard: *Well, he had a point. For a fifteen, sixteen, seventeen-year-old kid your stories were impressive. Hell, they'd be impressive for a fifty-year-old to write. They hold together well.*

Will: Thanks. Anyway, I told Joe that I was living at home with my parents when I wrote most of them. I didn't have to pay the mortgage. I didn't have to crank out the work. I could take more time. I mean, Joe Gill was a friend of Mickey Spillane. Joe was a pro! Whether you like Joe's work or not, he was a professional writer who got the job done.

Both he and Sam were very strong on meeting your deadlines. That comes from the old pulp days. You had to make that deadline or you were not a professional. Joe wrote reams of stories for Charlton. I wasn't always a big fan of his actual stories but he really knew how to construct them. They all had a beginning, middle and end. I wasn't that fond of his stories but I learned a lot from him.

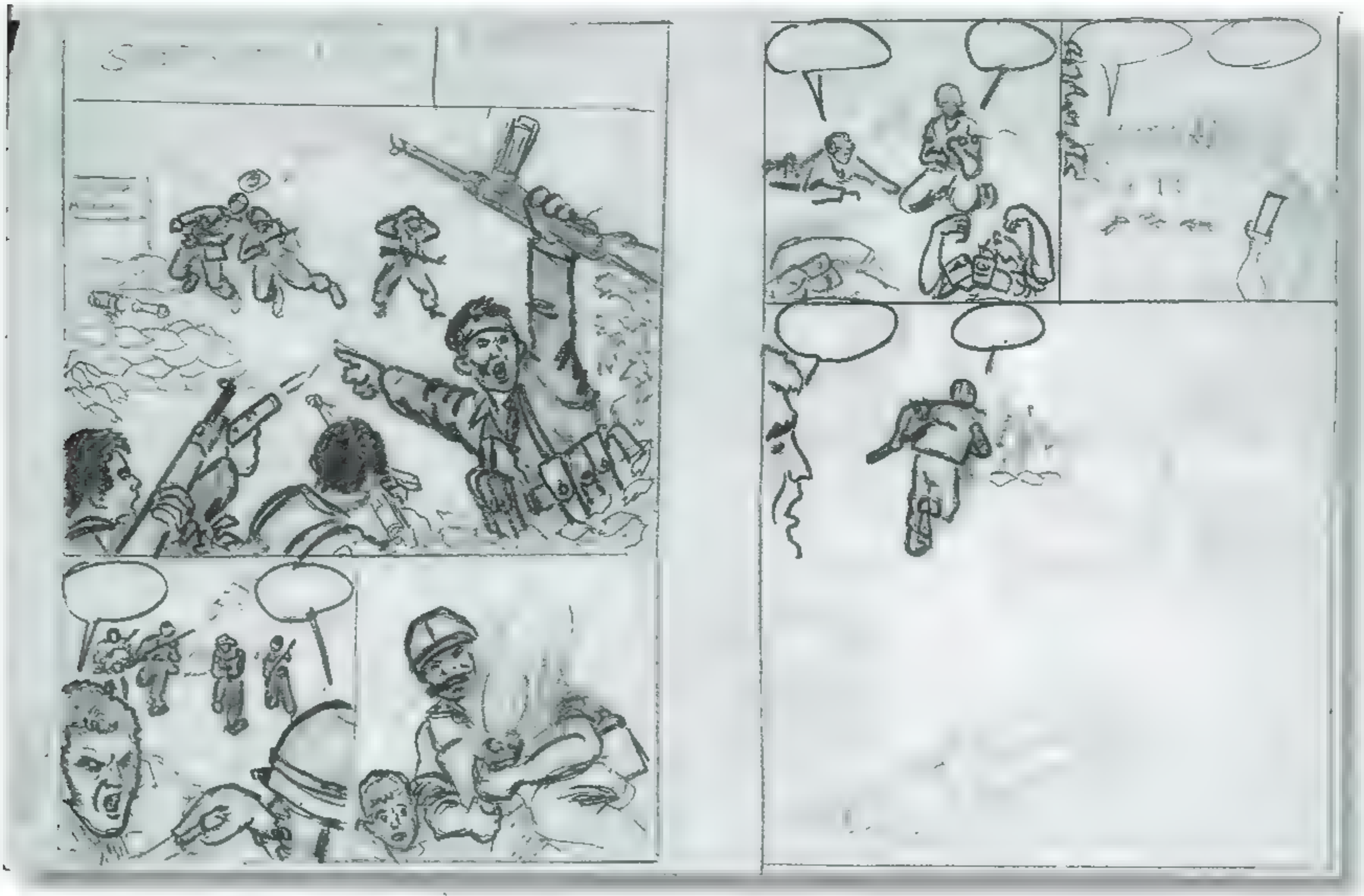
Richard: *I wrote an article on the Charlton* Hercules *title, which Joe Gill wrote the bulk of, and I was surprised at the high quality of the scripts. They're clever and funny, in a very sly way, and still hit all the adventure points that an action fan could want. Before that my main experience with Gill's work was his scripts for horror comics, which really don't hold up well.*

Will: Denny O'Neil wrote some of those *Hercules* stories, too, I think.

Richard: *Yeah, either Joe or Carl Wessler wrote #1 and then Denny wrote #2 to #5 and then Joe wrote all the stories from #6 to #13. Joe seemed to enjoy Westerns and war and fantasy titles, but I was a horror fan and my first memory of a Joe Gill story was that quite often the horror stories he wrote didn't have a climax. That may have been simply because he wrote so much, though.*

Will: Yeah, Joe would be playing poker or something and he'd get a call from a letterer saying his script was too long to fit in the balloon space available and he'd tell the letterer to cut out whatever the letterer wanted. He was a professional. He used to drive a truck and he found he could make more money being a writer. He was great to me that night on the panel and I felt really . . . honored. Wow, we had more in common than we had . . . well . . . not in common. I asked him once why he wrote so much propaganda. You see, it was a job to him. He wrote to get paid. If you look at his stories, they were extremely well structured. You mentioned that the *Hercules* stories were funny. Well, that was because they weren't the war stuff. He wrote almost every type of story that Charlton put out. He was just amazing!

In teaching creative writing I've had to branch out into writing other types of work, characters and ideas. But I was really limited when I was younger. They say you write



THE EAGLE
A SMALL CLEARING IN THE TEUTOBURG FOREST, GERMANIA, 9 C.E., DURING THE REIGN OF THE EMPEROR AUGUSTUS...
THEY STOOD IN STAGGERED FORMATION, SURVIVORS OF THE FIRST, THIRD AND FIFTH COHORTS, LESS THAN 500 BATTERED AND BLEEDING VETERANS OF THE ROMAN XIX LEGION... THEY HAD LONG AGO CAST THEIR DEADLY JAVELINS INTO THE MASSED, ANGRY FLESH OF THE ENEMY HOST AND ONCE MORE READIED THEMSELVES FOR BATTLE WITH THEIR MURDEROUS SHORT-SWORDS...
ONLY FOUR CENTURIONS HAD SURVIVED THE EARLIER SLAUGHTER, FOREMOST WAS OLD PONTIUS MARTELLUS, THE PRIMUS PILUS, THE CHIEF CENTURION OF THE FIRST CENTURY OF THE FIRST COHORT.
KEEP YOUR RANKS AND HOLD YOUR FORMATION!
CAIUS FATALIS, CENTURION OF THE THIRD COHORT, RALLIED THE FEW REMAINING AUXILIARY INFANTRYMEN TO HALT THEIR FLIGHT AND REGROUP BEHIND THE LEGIONARY EAGLE...
STAY WITH THE EAGLE, YOU LOT, AND YOU JUST MAY SURVIVE!
SJG

Splash page of "The Eagle," the last story Will and Sam worked on together, from ***Negative Burn*** v. 3 #2 (June 2006). Story © 2015 Will Franz. Art © 2015 Sam Glanzman.

Richard: *There was a mention in the interview you did years back with* Comic Book Artist *that you had showed your stand-alone story "The Kewpie Dolls" to Joe Kubert [*Fightin' Army *#84, Mar. 1969]. "Kewpie Dolls" was about two very young children in Italy who were conning both German and American soldiers into feeding them, then standing by emotionless and uncaring when the soldiers were killed, following which they would, in a very matter-of-fact way, move on to new marks.*

Will: I showed it to Joe as an example of what I could do and Joe said, "Willi, that's a horrible story!" I got immediately bugged because it was one of my favorites. Then Joe said, "No, no! It's well written. It's just the sentiment behind it!" It was about these little children who were scavengers. The guy who had befriended them, fed them, wasn't even dead yet and they were looting his body. That's what he meant by a horrible story. He just didn't say it clearly the first time. I was eighteen. He was like, "Who taught you that as an eighteen-year-old?"

Richard: *My guess would be a seventeen-year-old.*

Will: Right! [*laughs*] You got it! My friends my age at the time were sacking food at the grocery market or slicing cold cuts or driving chicken delivery service while I was at a typewriter. It was an interesting time.

Understand, there were constraints with Willy and his storylines. Schultz was fighting a futile battle. He was never going to get cleared of the murder charges or the treason. The military does not forgive that type of thing. There was a thing a few years back about a kid in World War II who got into the Navy when he was 12 years old. He went AWOL and they threw him in the brig! They didn't know he was that young but they were sure he was a deserter and that's what deserters get. He couldn't get a lawyer. I watched a movie about it, starring Rick Schroder [***Ed. note:*** Too Young the Hero, *1988*], with Sam up at his house and I asked him if that was accurate and he said yeah. Things were different back then. If you got locked up, forget it. They just threw away the key! That kid eventually got out, but with Schultz and the offenses against him, no way. No way he'd have a happy ending. They shot Eddie Slovik for desertion because Eisenhower needed an example. Eisenhower was very reluctant to execute him and he gave Slovik every chance to go back to his unit but Slovik refused. At some point, Eisenhower washed his hands and said, "You're on your own, buddy boy." That was that. Same thing would have happened with Schultz.

The Iron Corporal was something I was getting involved in and really enjoying. There was so much more that I could do with those characters than I could with Willy Schultz. Willy's story was one that had to be ended at some point. The Iron Corporal was a better ongoing series. I actually

enjoyed writing the Iron Corporal more than Willy Schultz. But, you know, Charlton dropped them both at the same time [***Ed. note:*** *the summer of 1970*].

Richard: *There was a two-year gap between the abrupt end of "The Iron Corporal" and "The Lonely War of Capt. Willy Schultz" and your rather brief return to comics.*

Will: Yeah, but none of that later stuff was series. The story I did for DC and the five or six done for Charlton were one-off stories. Stand-alones. One of them—"End Run U-575" [*Attack* #7, Sept. 1972]—I did a lot of research regarding U-boats. That one was butchered on the first page as well. The captain was talking about how the British and American submarines raid commerce and sink supply ships unannounced and that the British and Americans were considered heroes and the Germans, doing the same thing, were considered villains. So a line went, "OK, so let's do it—let's not disappoint the American reading public. Fire one!"

They cut part of that dialogue out, particularly the part about not disappointing the American public. I'd have to go digging to find the exact script but I was disappointed at how that one came out. "Conflict on a Hill with No Name" [*Fightin' Army* #104, July 1972] had a terrible spelling error by me. I spelled a word as "ringer" instead of "wringer." At the time, I was working at a major insurance company as an accountant. I put a vice president of the company in that story, who was decapitated in the first panel. All the main characters were people I worked with. There were some extra sales that way. Hank Allen wanted a few extra copies for his kids. Ken Snyder wanted some. Warren Wankoff was a guy I knew and I had him disintegrated with a mortar shell. He wanted extra copies.

Richard: *So how did your foray into comics end?*

Will: One time in the late 1970s or early '80s Sam wanted me to go to one of the editors at DC that he worked with. I don't want to mention the man's name. I believe he's since passed away. Sam wanted me to work there. So I did two "Haunted Tank" stories. I thought they were pretty good. One was real involved and the other was simpler but a bit of a morality tale. I sent them in with a letter. I got them back with a real snotty letter from the editor saying that I must have a lot of confidence in my stories to do completed scripts. He just didn't think much of them and he mentioned that DC had covered a similar story for the "Haunted Tank" that was superior to the one I wrote. It wasn't that they were rejected. I've gotten rejections before. It was the manner of the letter. When I read it to Sam he was apologizing to me. He was furious that I would have gotten that kind of letter from his editor. I later found out that the editor was basically abusive to everybody. It was his style.

It came at a time in my life where I loved writing but I didn't want to deal with that kind of attitude. I believe in constructive criticism. I got that from Sam and Dick Giordano but I couldn't tolerate getting my stories knocked just because someone could. I didn't think that was professional. I didn't feel it was in any way beneficial for anyone. I really try to avoid these mean-spirited people. Life's too short to deal with that.

Now I'm trying to get published again. I hope in a few years I get something worthwhile. My most recent comic story was one I wrote and Sam drew about Roman Legionaries in a disastrous invasion into Germany's Teutoburg Forest. It's called "The Eagle," and it appeared online in 2002 [***Ed note:*** *see Will Franz checklist on page 21*].

Richard: *You know that I recommended that online story to Joe Pruett, the publisher and editor of the B&W anthology* Negative Burn, *that he should consider reprinting that story in his magazine. He did do it but the printer screwed it up and printed the pages out of order. He ended up reprinting it with the pages in the right order in* Negative Burn *Vol. 3 #2 (June 2006) so that the story now makes sense to the reader.*

Will: There's an interesting thing about "The Eagle" that was irritating as hell. I was recovering from foot surgery. Now Sam doesn't like drawing unless he gets a paycheck. He doesn't like speculation. I will write on spec. I don't care! Sam's different. Drawing is his livelihood. I respect that. So I called Kirk Silvertsen, who was running the website the story originally appeared on, and told him I really wanted to work with Sam and asked him how much he could afford to pay him. He tells me he can afford to pay for eight pages. Great! I write up an eight-page story.

Kirk originally approached me a few years ago. He had read a book called *Gates of Fire*, about the 300 Spartans. He thought it would make a great graphic novel. He thought I would be a great scriptwriter for it but he couldn't get the clearance from the publisher. That was why I started working on the graphic novel idea, which is now a novel, *The Mailed Fist*. Sam and I had differences on how the characters looked. He didn't have a problem with how the story went but he "didn't want some writer telling him how to draw!" I didn't figure I was telling him how to lay out or design the page but the characters and how they looked were very real to me. "Those muttonchops are stupid!" He just wanted more control than I could give to him. So again, I withdrew the project. Plus, it was getting so long that for Sam to finish it he would have to live to be 230 years old. I also was getting advice from people that the story shouldn't be a graphic novel but rather a full novel. It was expanding.

Anyway, back to "The Eagle." I had to come up with something else for Sam to draw. I've always liked the Romans and the Roman Legions. I'm browsing through reference pages, not even really reading, just skimming. I'm looking at armor and positions and what have you. Then I go to bed, wake up the next morning, and go, "The Teutoburg Campaign! Vargus's Legions!" and I wrote the entire story in a day. Boom! Boom! Boom! I send it off to Sam and he was still balking at anything I wanted him to do. Kirk was able to talk him into being reasonable. That I had reasons for certain language in the story. Reasons for why

Will Franz participating in the 2011 Annual Tartan Day Parade down the Avenue of the Americas in Manhattan. Photo courtesy of and © 2015 Will Franz.

.. AND ELENA NEED NEVER KNOW...
BAM
NOW TELL ME THE TRUTH, BILL... (COUGH, COUGH)... YOU REALLY DID KILL THAT GUY, DIDN'T YOU...?
NO, JON...
FUNNY (COUGH, CHOKE) .BUT I STILL DON'T BELIEVE YOU.. HA HA OH WOW. !
NOW...YOU'LL INHERIT COMMAND OF THIS MESS...FROM ME... I'M SORRY . ABOUT YOUR...PARDON... OH, WOW....EVERY...THING...OHHH...
JON. !?
CAPTAIN WILLIAM SCHULTZ, UNITED STATES ARMY..... FALSELY ACCUSED OF A BATTLEFIELD MURDER...TRIED, CONVICTED, ESCAPED..... JON DAURIO HAS DIED... AND WITH HIM...YOUR ONLY HOPE FOR FREEDOM...!
FINI
The End

One last look at the lonely war of Capt. Willy Schultz: the final page of "The Informer," from ***Fightin' Army*** #92 (July 1970). Capt. Willy Schultz TM & © 2015 Will Franz Art © 2015 Sam Glanzman.

him two reference books on the Roman Legions so that the centurions would look like first-century Roman centurions, the archers would look like archers of the time period. Sam used them and he did accurate, detailed work. One thing I've always admired and respected about Sam is that he has a great respect for detail. He likes it to be right.

So the story comes out on Kirk's site. I get copies of it. Then I hear from Sam—"Gee, Willi, that should have been longer." I went "AARRGH!" [*laughs*] Then Sam didn't accept the money! He didn't like the job he did on it so he didn't take the money. Now he's telling me the story should have been longer. As it was, Kirk had to cut a few lines from the final caption that detailed the aftermath of the Teutoburg disaster, because it was just too much copy. I compacted the story as much as I could. I didn't go into the camp followers. I didn't go into great detail about what a fiasco this campaign was. Kirk could do an eight-page story—that was the limit. I had to keep it simple, keep it focused on the centurions. Don't get into all the other details! Then Sam didn't take the money, which is why I made it short to begin with! [*chuckles*] I love the man. Sam is one of the finest human beings I have ever known. I've never heard a word said against Sam. I've spoken with a number of people about him. He's a very well-liked and well-loved man who's been through a lifetime of experiences. I think he went through more in World War II than he's willing to let on. I got a glimpse of that when we were together the last time at a convention in the city. He's quite an individual and I consider it an honor and a privilege that he's been a friend all these years. He never treated me like, "Aw, he's just a dumb kid!" He took a genuine interest in me and my work and really helped me to grow as a creative individual. I've used some of the lessons that I've learned by his example. He doesn't remember half the things he did that taught me something. He didn't say stuff to me. He showed it. I use some of the things I learned through his drawing style in writing. I pass that on to some of the students I teach. He's quite a guy, he really is. He doesn't appreciate his own work.

Richard: *I love his work. To me, it's the kind of comic work that's rock solid. It's great storytelling because you never have to worry about the panel placement or character placement because he's done it all for you.*

Will: We were at this convention and I was asked to be there because they were going to have a Sam Glanzman interview. I picked up one of his "U.S.S. Stevens" panels that had a catapult-mounted airplane on the destroyer. They only had the planes on those ships for a brief while because the ship had to give up some of its armament to fit the plane in and what not. I forget all the reasons. Anyway, he drew the plane coming in behind the *Stevens*. There's no doubt as to where he wants your eye going when you look at that panel and I was pointing this out. He starts going, "Will, Will, cut it out, OK?" He can't take the compliments. He's like ol' Gary Cooper—"Aw, shucks." [*chuckles*] Makes him uncomfortable. You know, I'm legally blind yet I can see the economy and beauty of his work. He's a master storyteller. If someone asks me to tell of how I feel blessed, Sam is one of the blessings. If a picture is worth a thousand words, then I've written quite a few thousand words over Glanzman art.

He's so much better than the guys who grew up reading only Spider-Man and that repetitive, egomaniacal junk and then make a living trying to imitate that kind of drawing. To me, that kind of stuff is an exercise in brutality, violence without consequence. Nobody in those stories stops to look at the consequences of their actions. I'm sorry. I'm starting to ramble . . .

Richard: *During the late 1960s, Jim Steranko and Neal Adams were getting a lot of praise, and deservedly so, for doing elaborate graphic designs on the comics page. They would do special effects in smoke and do tilted panels and what have you. I'm looking at Sam's work from the same period and he's doing the exact same thing. It was largely overlooked by everybody, probably because it appeared at Charlton where nobody really expected innovation, but he was doing it.*

Will: Sam is an illustrator as well as a comics artist. He understands his job. He's telling a story through art, working with the author. Some other artists, I ain't naming names, are too concerned with art and not enough with storytelling. They have beautiful pages but you can't follow the story at all. Or the story is dribbling, weak and hard to follow because the art is so overdone. No real design. It's the equivalent of a storyteller screaming the story at you instead of talking to you while telling the story. After a while you can listen to just so much screaming. Sam will talk to you. He'll whisper at the right spot. And he'll laugh with you. That's the way he will plot out a story. Sam is over 90 years old now and he still doesn't really appreciate his own abilities.

Here's another story for you. I was at a comic convention here in the city. I'm sitting there and I've made a sign for myself. It said, "Will Franz, writer. Writers create pictures with words." I had some Willy Schultz reprints there. I was working on the *Mailed Fist* book during the down times. Sitting across from me is Butch Patrick, who played Eddie Munster in the original TV series. I think he was the only guy feeling lonelier than I did. He's sitting across the way from me. Nobody knew who the hell he was. I hope they were paying him enough for the humiliation. So this mediocre artist steps up to me. I'm not sure if he was even a pro. He may have only appeared in fanzines. A couple walks past and the young lady is quite attractive. She walks by, glances down at my sign and smiles at me. I think, "Hey, maybe she's going to want to talk about writing!" Nope, she walks right over to the mediocre artist and starts talking to him. People want pictures nowadays, not writing. In the old movie *Arthur* there's a scene with John Gielgud, who picks up a magazine and tells Dudley Moore, "Here, Arthur, read this magazine. It has many pictures." Thank God for Harry Potter, he's inspiring kids to pick up books again.

Richard: *On that note, it's time to conclude this interview. Thank you, Mr. Franz!*

Will: You're welcome. It's been fun.

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Will with soulmate Annalisa Rivera at a recent East Village restaurant outing. Many thanks to Annalisa for her help supplying numerous scans for this interview! Photo © 2015 Ron and Karen Evry, courtesy of Will Franz.

WILL FRANZ CHECKLIST

[***Ed. Note:*** Data supplied by Will Franz.]

Charlton Premiere v. 1 #19 (July 1967), "The Sniper." Charles Nicholas, pencils; Vince Alascia, inks. First published comics work.

D-Day #5 (Oct. 1967), "D-Day." Bill Montes, pencils; Ernie Bache, inks. The entire book. I even got a bonus for that one.

War Heroes #27 (Nov. 1967), "Fox Hunt, Part 1." The first installment of "The Devil's Brigade," a blessedly short-lived series about tank warfare in North Africa. *War Heroes* was canceled with this issue and "The Devil's Brigade" serial finished its run alongside "Willy Schultz" in *Fightin' Army*.

Fightin' Army #76-#92 (Oct. 1967–July 1970)—"The Lonely War of Capt. Willy Schultz." #84 had the stand-alone story "The Kewpie Dolls." There was also a Sam Glanzman illustrated stand-alone story called "Hidden Killers" in #88.

Army War Heroes #22-26, 28-38 (Nov. 1967–June 1970)—"The Iron Corporal." #31 also had the stand-alone story "72 Tons of Steel." #32 included the stand-alone story "Huertgen Minefield" which I scripted and penciled. It was inked by Sam Glanzman.

Army War Heroes #36 (Feb. 1970)—"A Course in Murder" was a story scripted by Joe Gill, penciled by me and inked by Sam.

Fightin' Army #104 (July 1972)—"Conflict on a Hill with No Name."

Fightin' Army #107 (Jan. 1973)—"Act of Mercy."

Fightin' Army #110 (July 1973)—"Panzerjager."

Attack #7 (Sept. 1972)—"End Run U-575."

Attack #8 (Nov. 1972)—"The Organist and the SS."

I also did two one-shot stories for *Fightin' Marines* (#84 (Mar. 1969), illustrated by Sanho Kim, and thumbnails for a "Shotgun Harker & Chicken Smith" story, written by Joe Gill and with finished art by Sam Glanzman, also for *Fightin' Marines*.

DC's *Weird War Tales* #5 (May-June 1972)—"Slave," drawn by Russ Heath. My only DC story.

Negative Burn, v. 3 #2 (June 2006)—"The Eagle," drawn by Sam Glanzman (originally appeared online at Kirk Silvertsen's Web site at **www.comicbookstories.com**). This was written in a day while recovering from foot reconstruction in 2002. There have been some other finished comic-style scripts but no money to get them drawn.

—Will Franz

ATOMIC RABBIT

WITH SPECIAL GUESTS: PUDGY PIG AND Brother George™

IN "Lip Stickup"

RABBITVILLE FESTIVAL

BROUGHT TO YOU BY
DONNIE PITCHFORD, Story, Letters, Inks, Colors
George Wildman, Pencils
MICHAEL AMBROSE, Editor

ATOMIC RABBIT, WE WANT YOU TO BE THE *KING* OF THE FESTIVAL!

BRING A *DATE* TO BE YOUR *QUEEN!*

AH, *SHUCKS!* I'VE BEEN SO BUSY FIGHTING *CRIME*, I HAVEN'T HAD *TIME* FOR *DATING!*

HMMMMMMMM!!!

I HAVE A TINY BIT OF *U235 CARROT MASH!* NOT ENOUGH FOR A *BOMB*, BUT ENOUGH FOR A *BOMBSHELL!* OPERATOR? GET ME *WENDY WABBIT*, VILLAGE OF *FIORE!*

HELLOOOO

SLY FOX HERE! WENDY, BABY, I CAN MAKE YOU *RICH!!*

© 2015 George Wildman & Donnie Pitchford / Brother George ™ & © 2015 Wildman Creative Studios, LLC / www.wildtoonz.com
Atomic Rabbit created by Al Fago / Pudgy Pig created by Pat Masulli

47 MINUTES, 31 SECONDS LATER...

BLOOP

U235 CARROTS GIVE ATOMIC RABBIT HIS POWER! I HAVE JUST ENOUGH TO MAKE THIS WEAPON!

POP! POP!

DRIP

HISSSSSSS!!

LIPSTICK?

YES! ONE KISS, AND ATOMIC RABBIT WILL BE HELPLESS! MEANWHILE, MY GANG AND I WILL ROB RABBITVILLE!

MMM! I HAVE A TOTALLY ORIGINAL WAY TO GET ATOMIC RUBE'S ATTENTION!

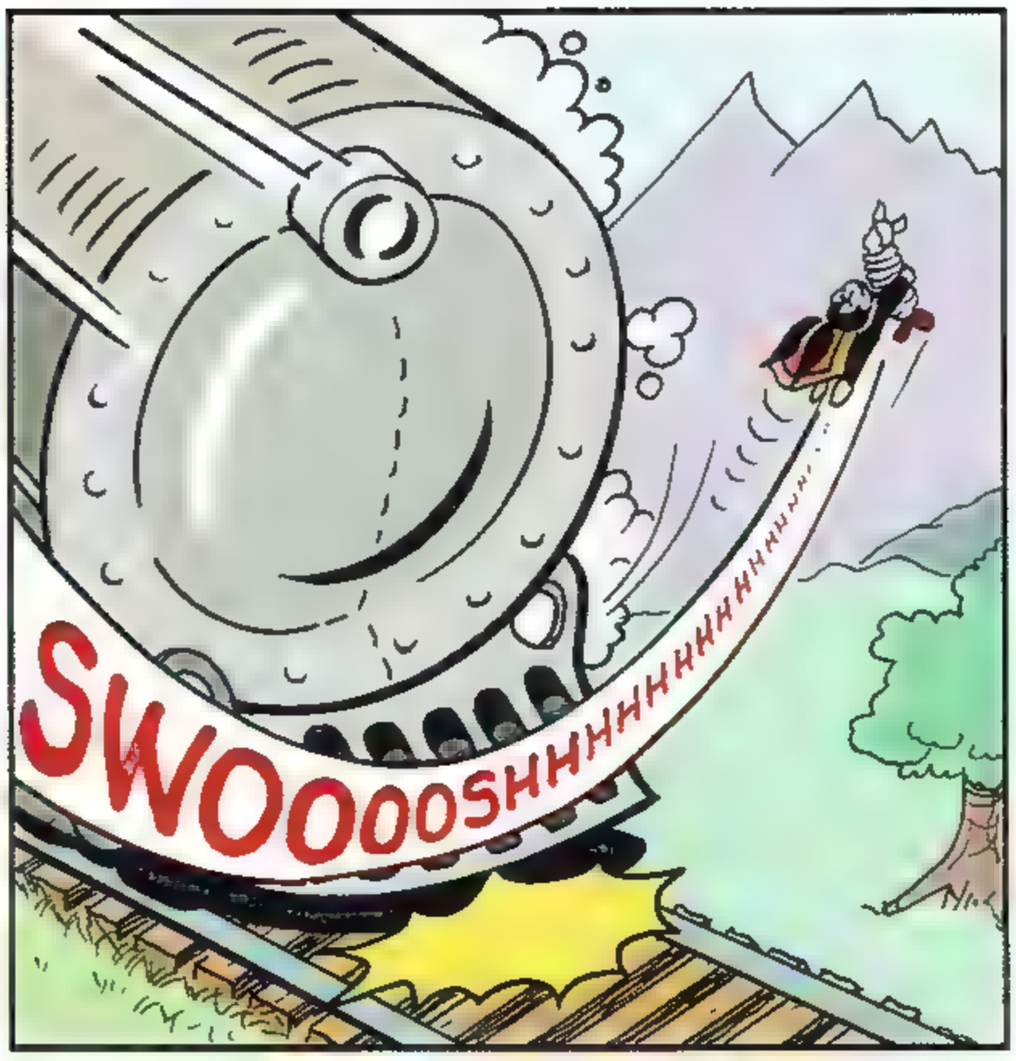
EEEK SAVE ME ATOMIC RABBIT!

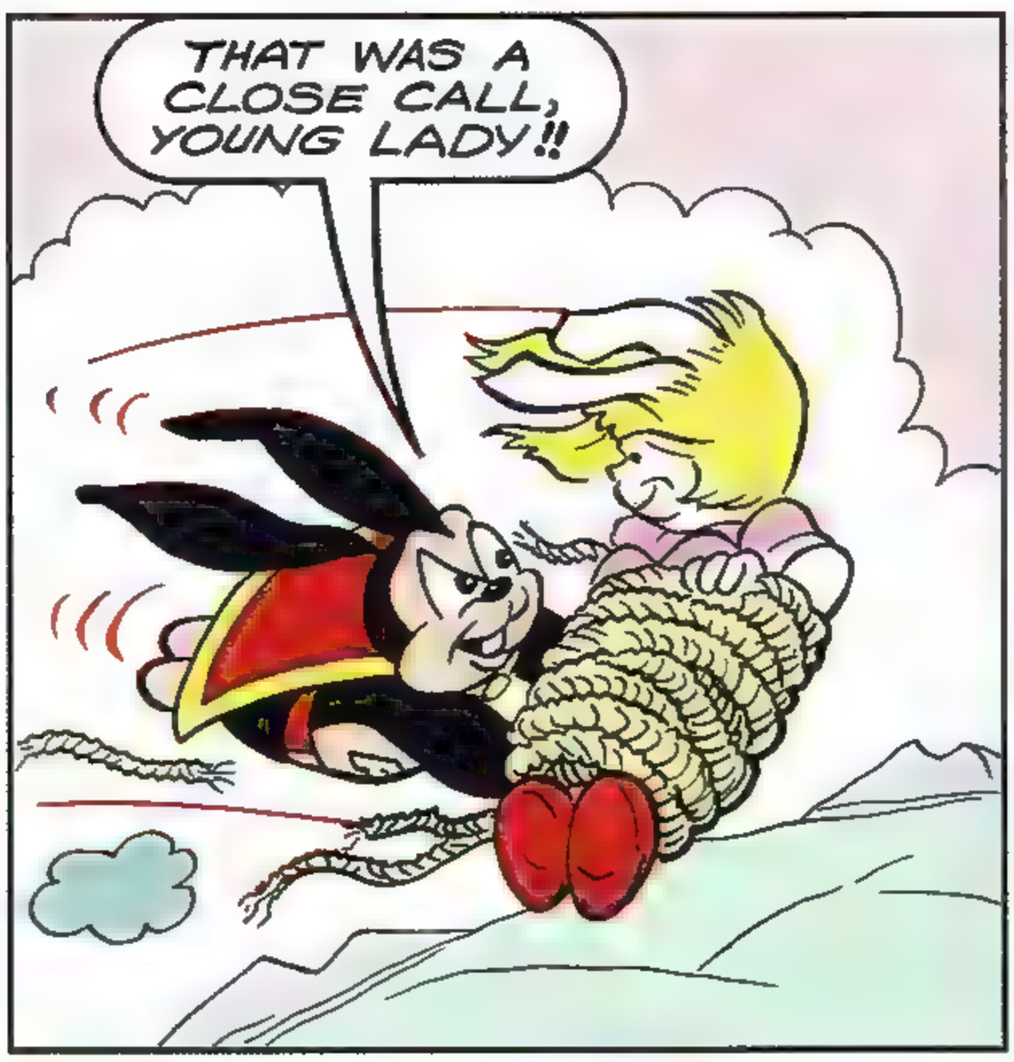
WOOOOOH!!

CHUG!

2

WHA??
SAVE ME!


SWOOOOSHHHHHHHH


THAT WAS A CLOSE CALL, YOUNG LADY!!

OH! MY HERO!

SMOOCH!

DUUHH...
GOSH!!
3

IT WAS SURE NICE OF ATOMIC RABBIT TO INVITE ME TO THE RABBITVILLE FESTIVAL! I'D BETTER STOP HERE AND MAKE SURE OF MY DIRECTIONS!

EDGE OF THE WOODS

YOU MUST BE *BROTHER GEORGE!* AM I ON THE RABBITVILLE ROAD?

CARROT CAKES

FOLLOW YOU? *YOU BET!*

A HOP, SKIP, AND JUMP LATER...

ATOMIC RABBIT! HEY! IT'S PUDGY!!! HEY!!

KISSY-KISSY

KISS

THAT'S ODD! HE *IGNORED* ME!

4

SHUCKS!! ATOMIC RABBIT ACTS LIKE HE DOESN'T KNOW ME!!

FESTIVAL

TOWN DUMP!

THIS IS THE LAST OF THE U235 LIPSTICK! KEEP ATOMIC RABBIT OCCUPIED IN THE PARK WHILE MY GANG ROBS ALL THE STORES THROUGH THE BACK ALLEYS!

JEEPERS! WHAT AM I GONNA DO!?

I KNOW! I'LL FIND BROTHER GEORGE!!

FESTIVAL

5

FESTIVAL

LADEEEES AND GENTLEMEN!

GREAT IDEA, BROTHER GEORGE, SWAPPING **FROSTING** FOR THE **LIPSTICK!**

OUR FESTIVAL KING, ATOMIC RABBIT...

JEEPERS! WE **BARELY** MADE THE **SWITCHEROO!!**

...WILL KISS THE FESTIVAL QUEEN!!

SMOOCH!

YAY

YAY!

YAY

YAY!

YOU TASTE **SWEETER,** MY **SWEET,** BUT YOU'RE **NOT** SO **SWEET!**

QUICK, ATOMIC RABBIT! SLY FOX'S GANG IS ROBBING RABBITVILLE!!

GULP!
*U235 CARROT!

SOCK!
OOOW
POW
SPLAT
7

HA! "QUEEN," MY LUCKY RABBIT'S FOOT! IT'S THE DUNGEON FOR YOU TWO!

CUTI CO.

PEAR & SON

KARL RADIO

JAIL

GILL

YOU'VE REALLY EARNED YOUR CROWN, ATOMIC RABBIT!

AND BROTHER GEORGE WANTS YOU TO HAVE THESE!

CARRO

I THINK I'VE FOUND MY TRUE LOVE!

AR

THE END

GFWildman

8

SNUFFY SMITH®

HOPALONG JUGHAID

HOW CAN YA TELL A TOAD FROM A FROG, JUGHAID ?

THAT'S EASY, MIZ PRUNELLY !!

I **ALWAYS** KEEP TH' **FROG** IN MY **LEFT POCKET** !!

JUGHAID SMIF--GO TO DETENTION IMMEDIATELY AN' TAKE THAT SLIMY FROG WIF YOU !!

I CAN ONLY R'MEMBER ONE DAY WHEN MIZ PRUNELLY DIDN'T YELL AT ME, AN' THAT WUZ TH' DAY SHE HAD **LARYNGITIS** !!

DETENTION

STORY AN' ART: JOHN ROSE **COLORS:** DONNIE PITCHFORD
EDITORS: BRENDAN BURFORD, KING FEATURES/MICHAEL AMBROSE, CHARLTON SPOTLIGHT

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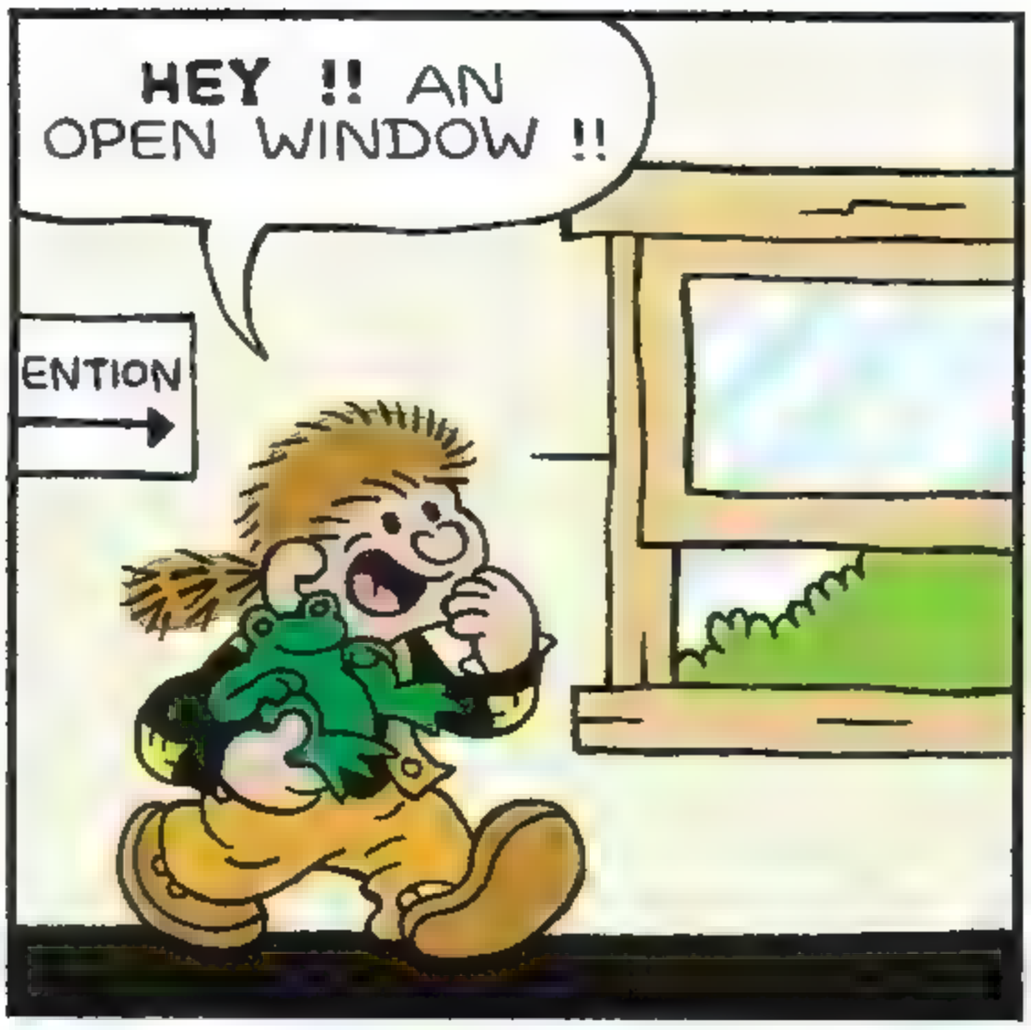
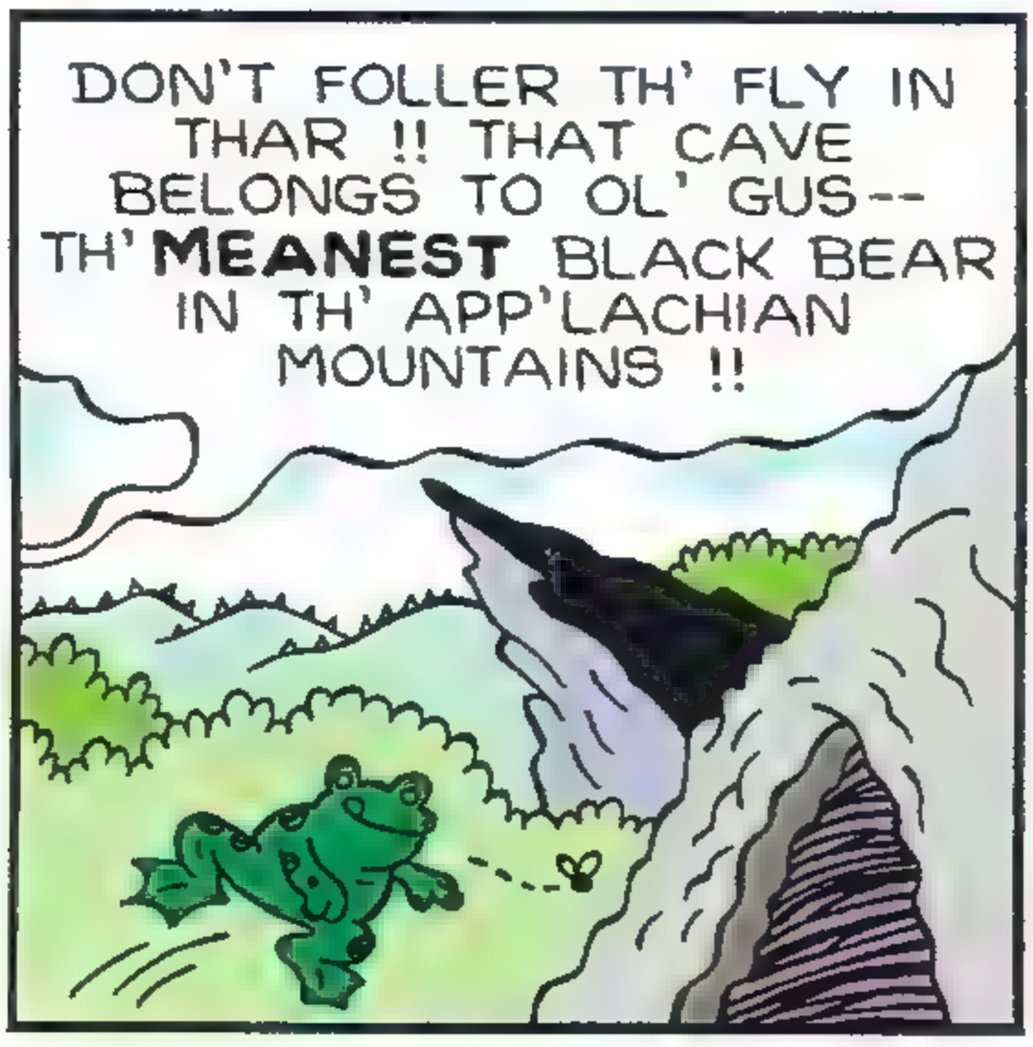

HEY !! AN OPEN WINDOW !!
ENTION

WHO NEEDS SCHOOL ?! WE'LL ROCK-HOP UP HAWKINS CREEK AN' HAVE A FUN DAY EXPLORIN' !!
DETENTION

FREDDY !!
TOAD-ALLY DELICIOUS !!
LEAP!


DON'T FOLLER TH' FLY IN THAR !! THAT CAVE BELONGS TO OL' GUS-- TH' MEANEST BLACK BEAR IN TH' APP'LACHIAN MOUNTAINS !!

YIKES !! NOW I HAVE TO GO IN AN' RESCUE HIM !!
2

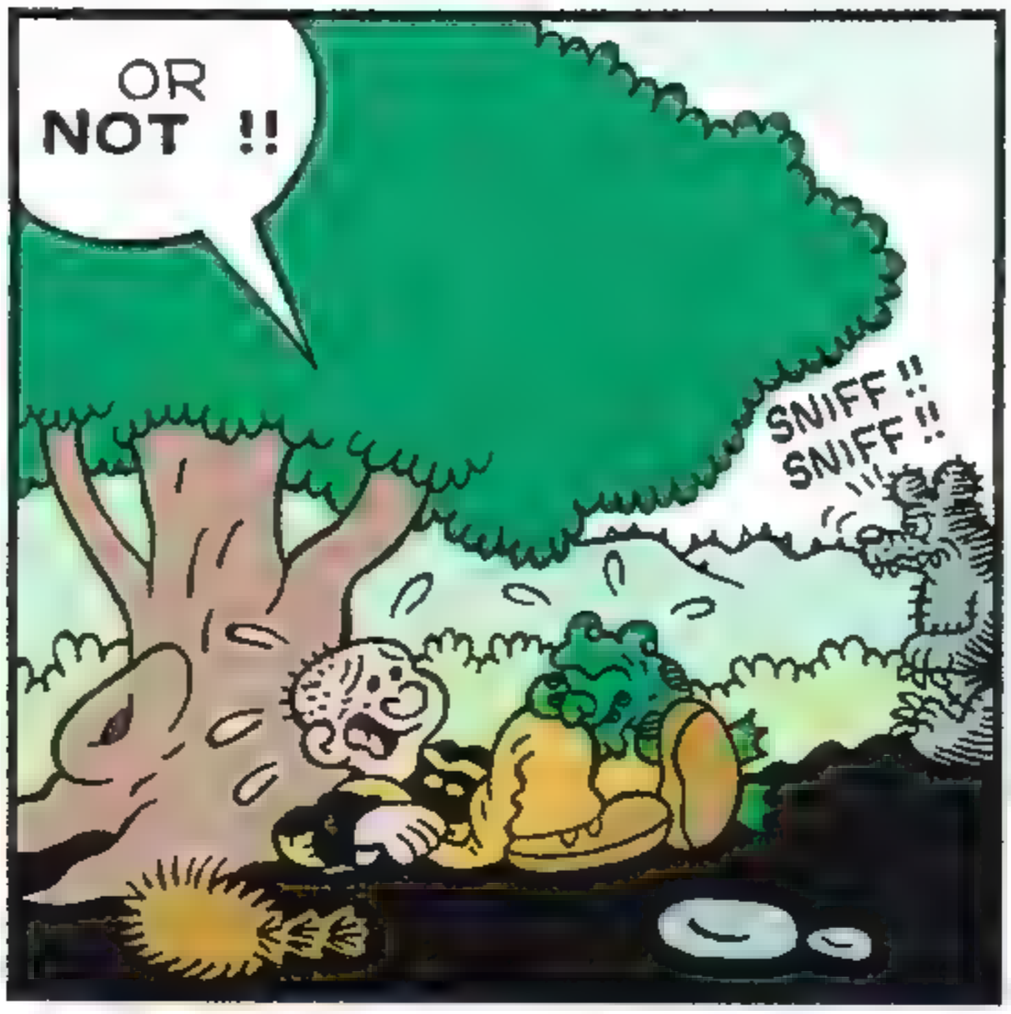
ZZZZ
twitch
twitch

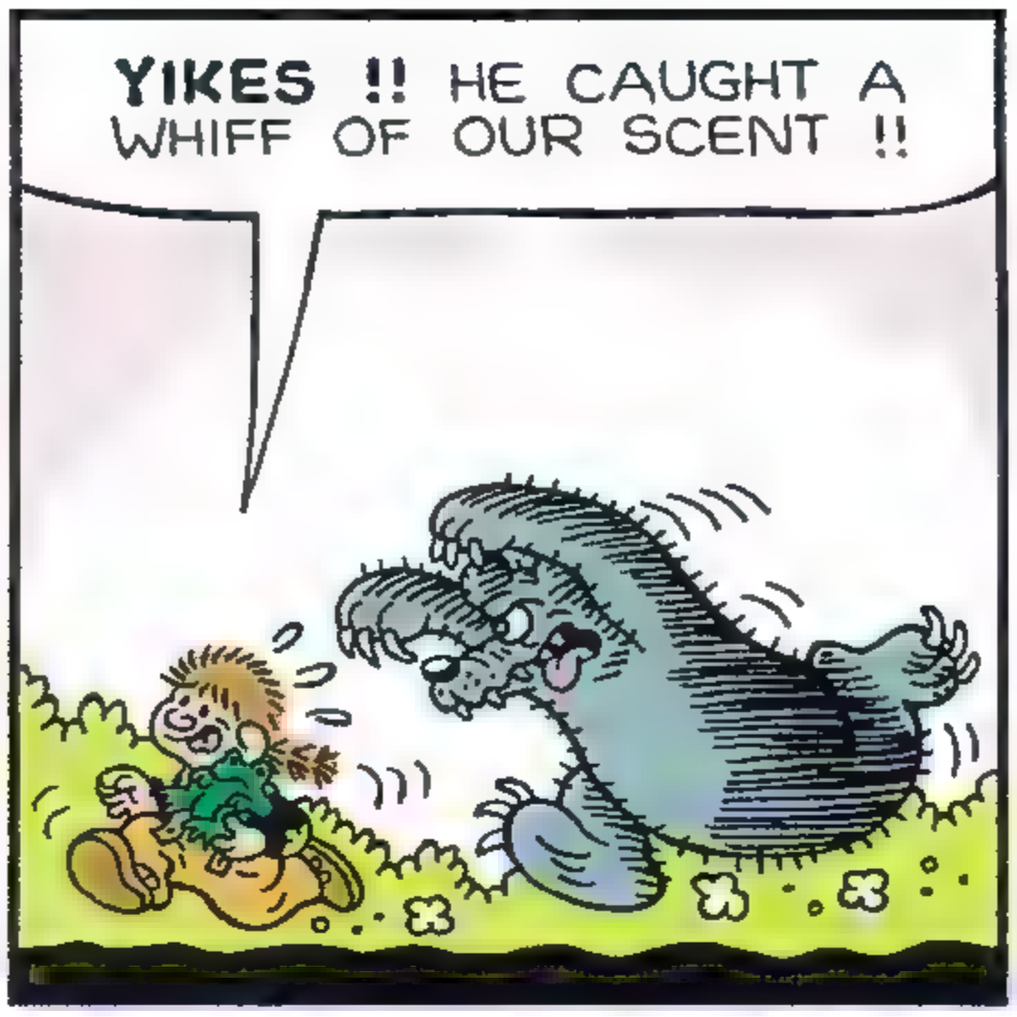
AAAHHH...

AAAHHH

CHOOOOO

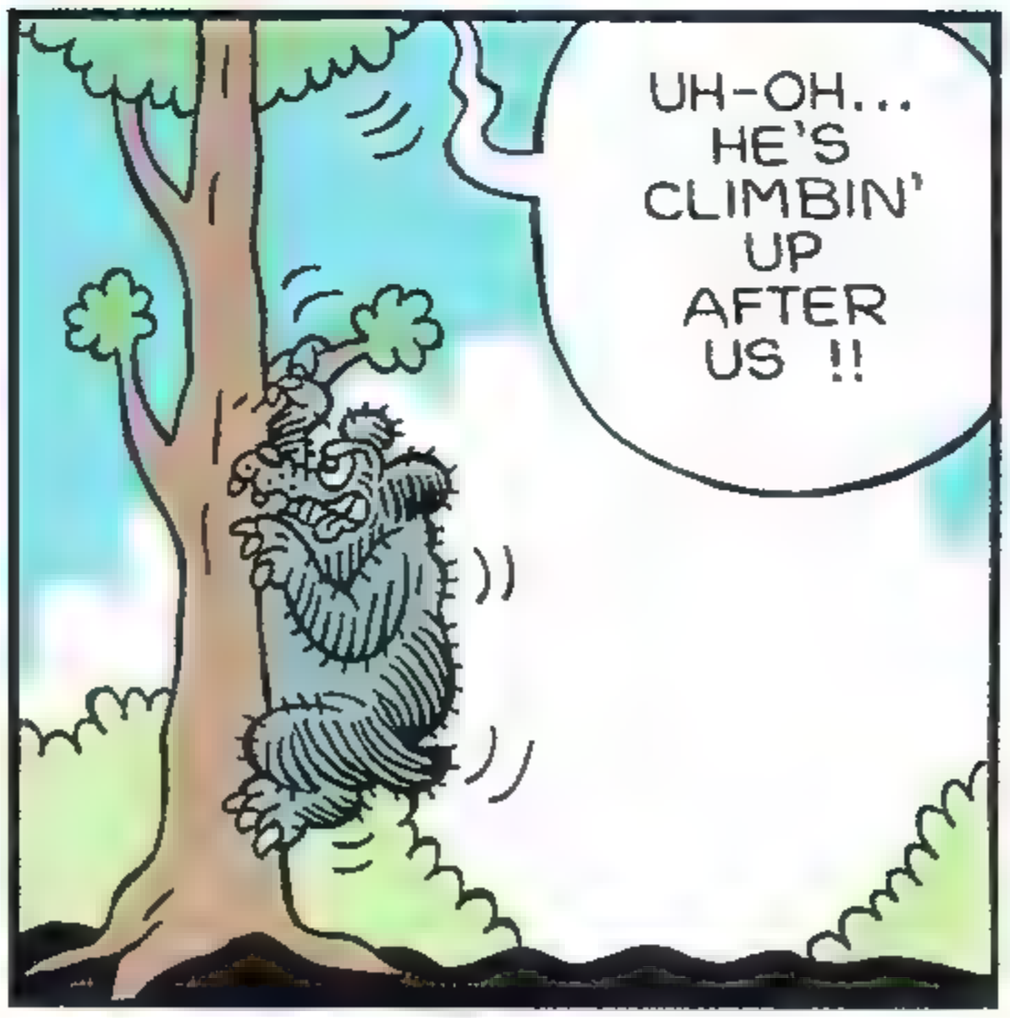
WHEW !! I THINK WE'RE SAFE !!
3

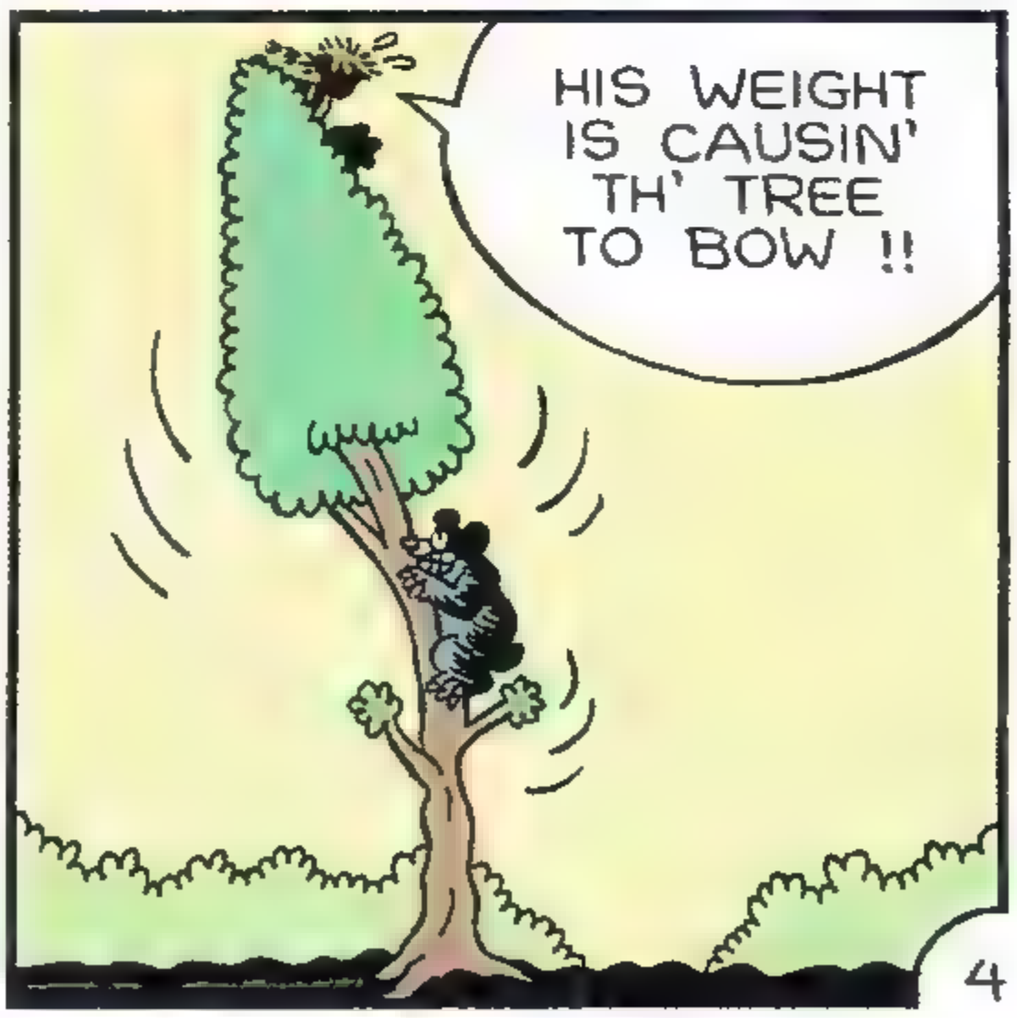

OR
NOT !!
SNIFF !!
SNIFF !!


YIKES !! HE CAUGHT A WHIFF OF OUR SCENT !!

HE WANTS LUNCH AN' WE'RE IT !!
LEAP !!
LEAP !!

I'M NOT SURE IF THAT GROWL IS COMIN' FROM HIS MOUTH OR HIS STOMACH !!
Growl!


UH-OH... HE'S CLIMBIN' UP AFTER US !!

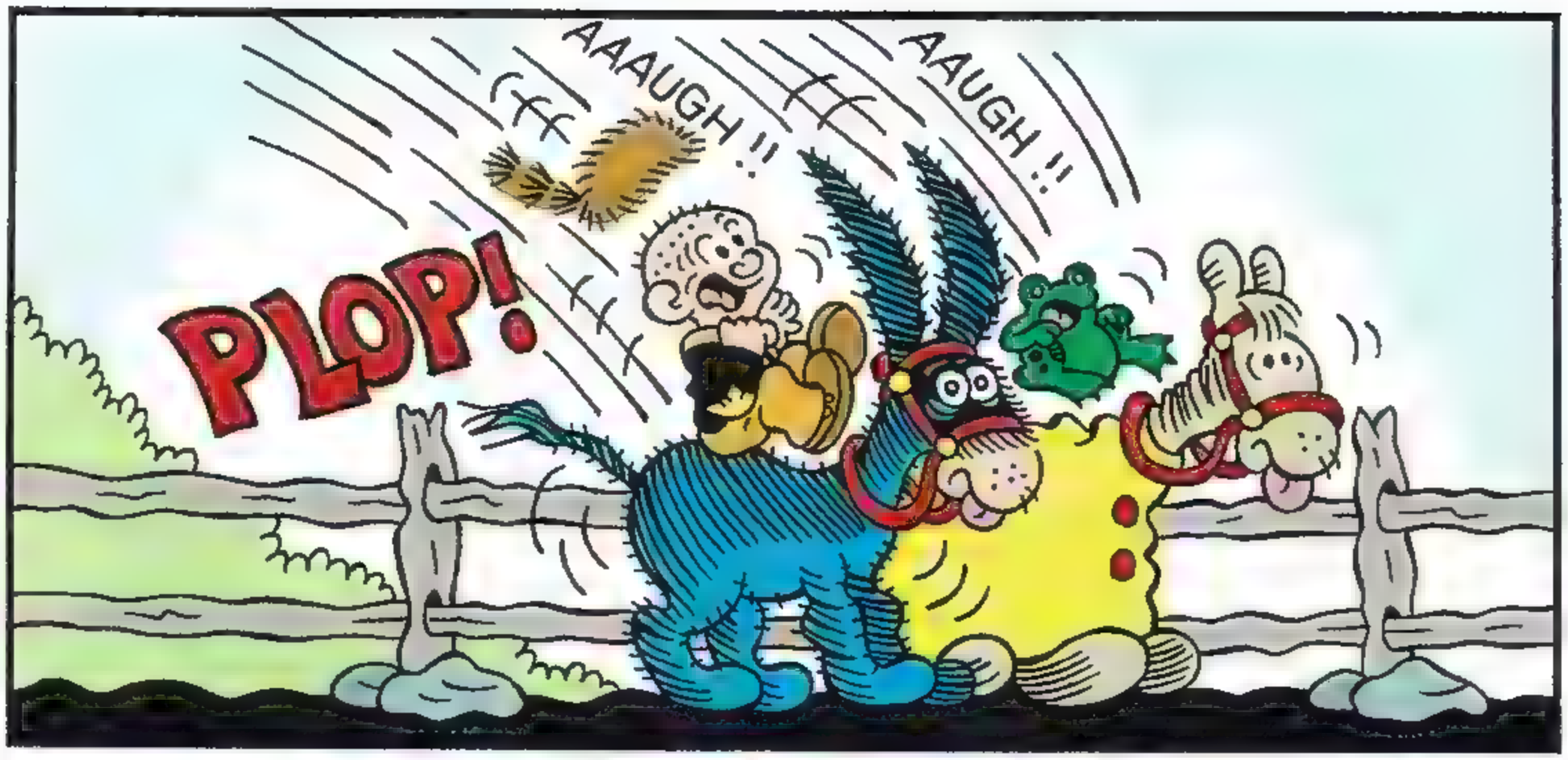

HIS WEIGHT IS CAUSIN' TH' TREE TO BOW !!
4

SNAP !!

ZING !!

AAAUGHHH !!

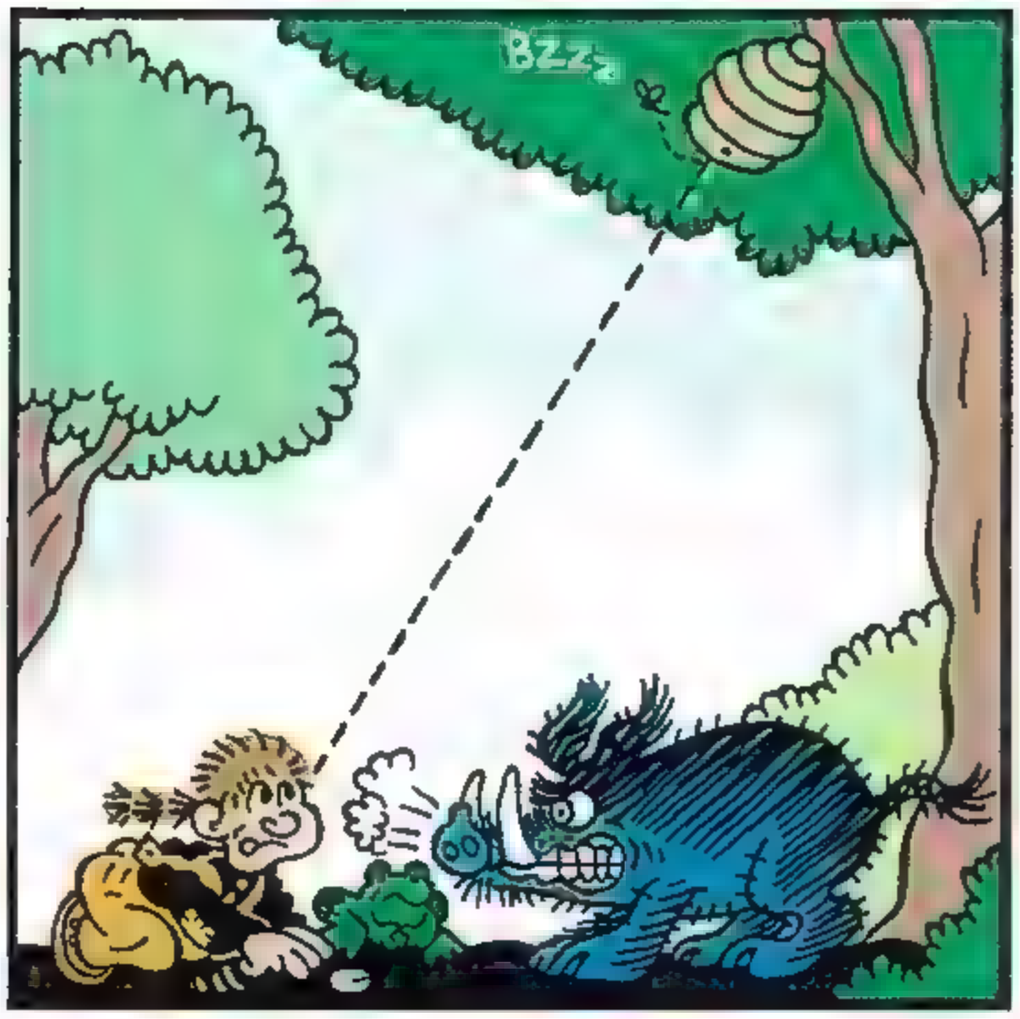
5


AAAUGH !!
AAAUGH !!
PLOP!

WHOA!
DID HE SAY GO ?

TOSS!!
SCREEECH!!

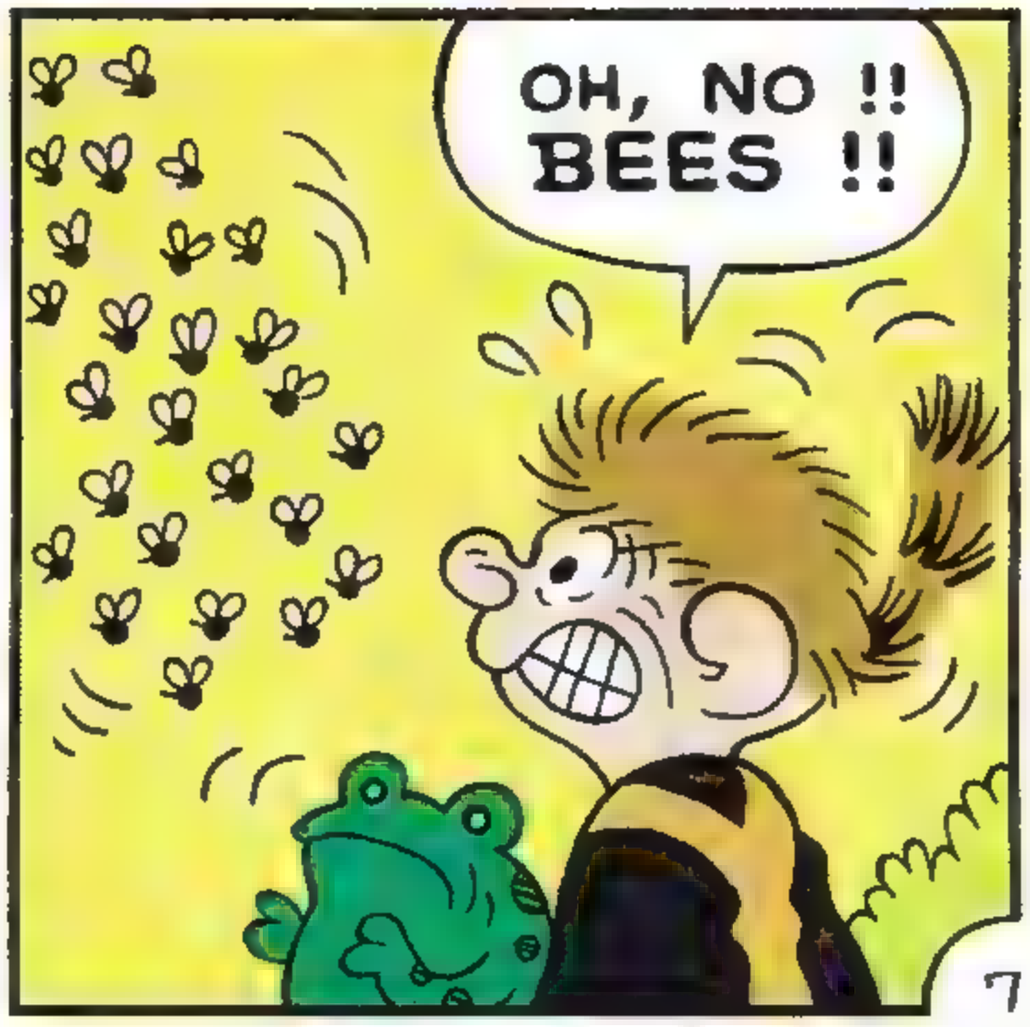
GRRR!!
DUMP!!
6


BZZz

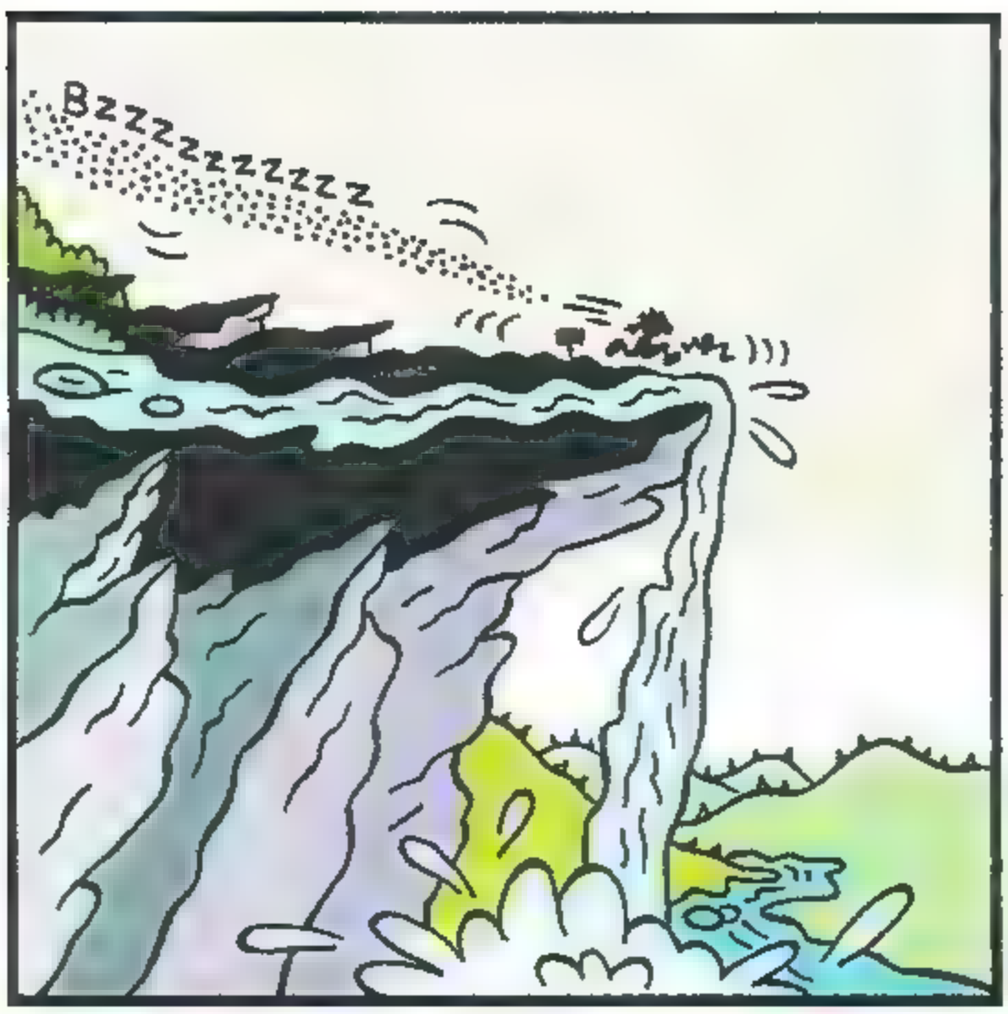
THROW!!

BREAK!

YIKES !!


OH, NO !!
BEES !!
7

BZZZZZZZ
LIZARDS LEDGE FALLS


Bzzzzzzzzzz

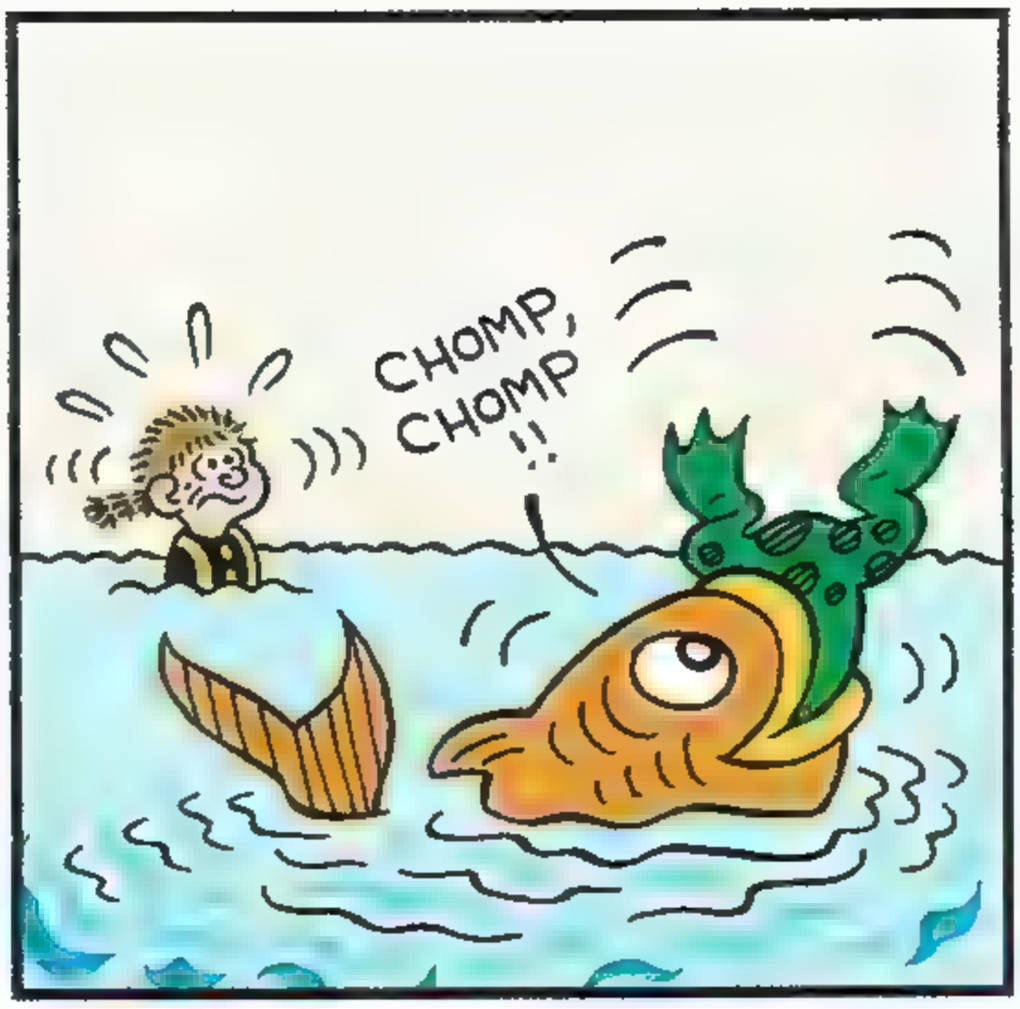
LIZARDS LEDGE FALLS
JUMP!

SPLASH!

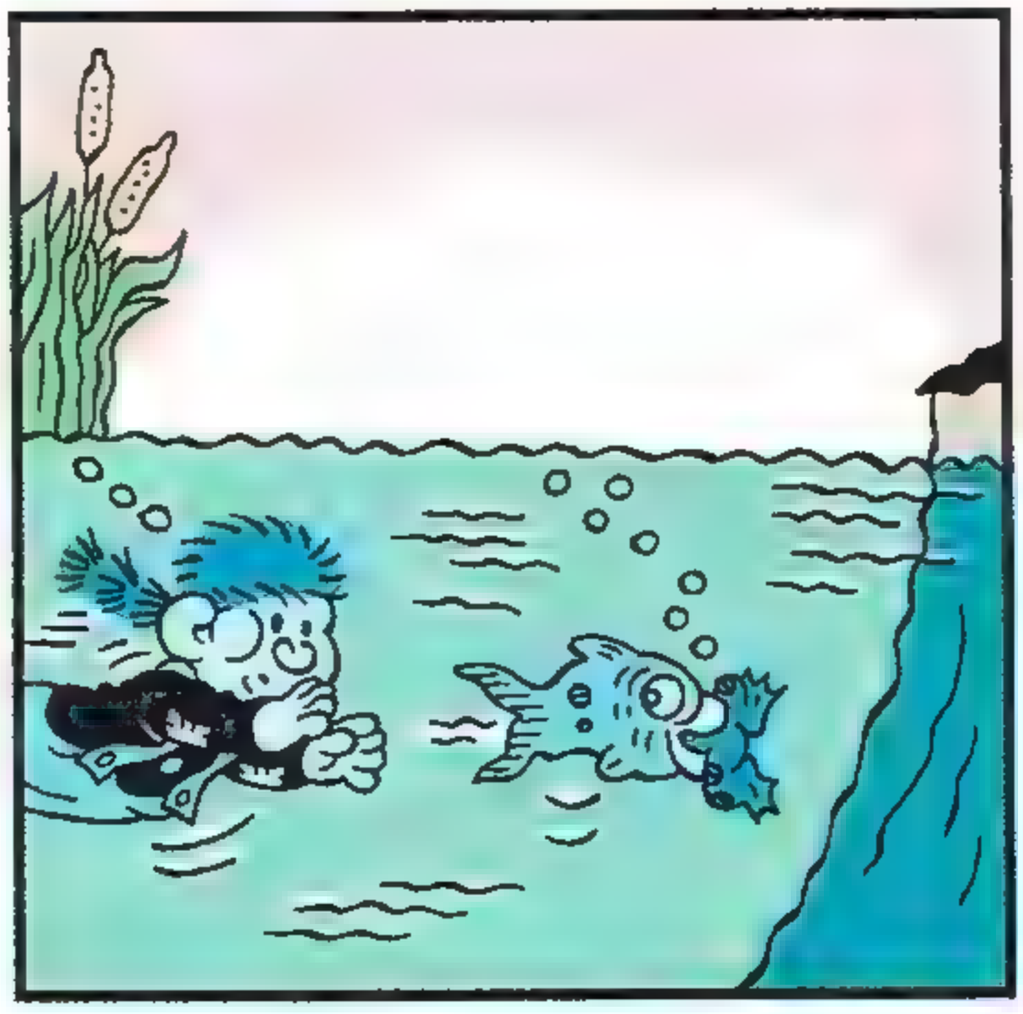
WHEW, FREDDY-- WE MADE IT !!
WE'RE SAFE, BUDDY !!

8

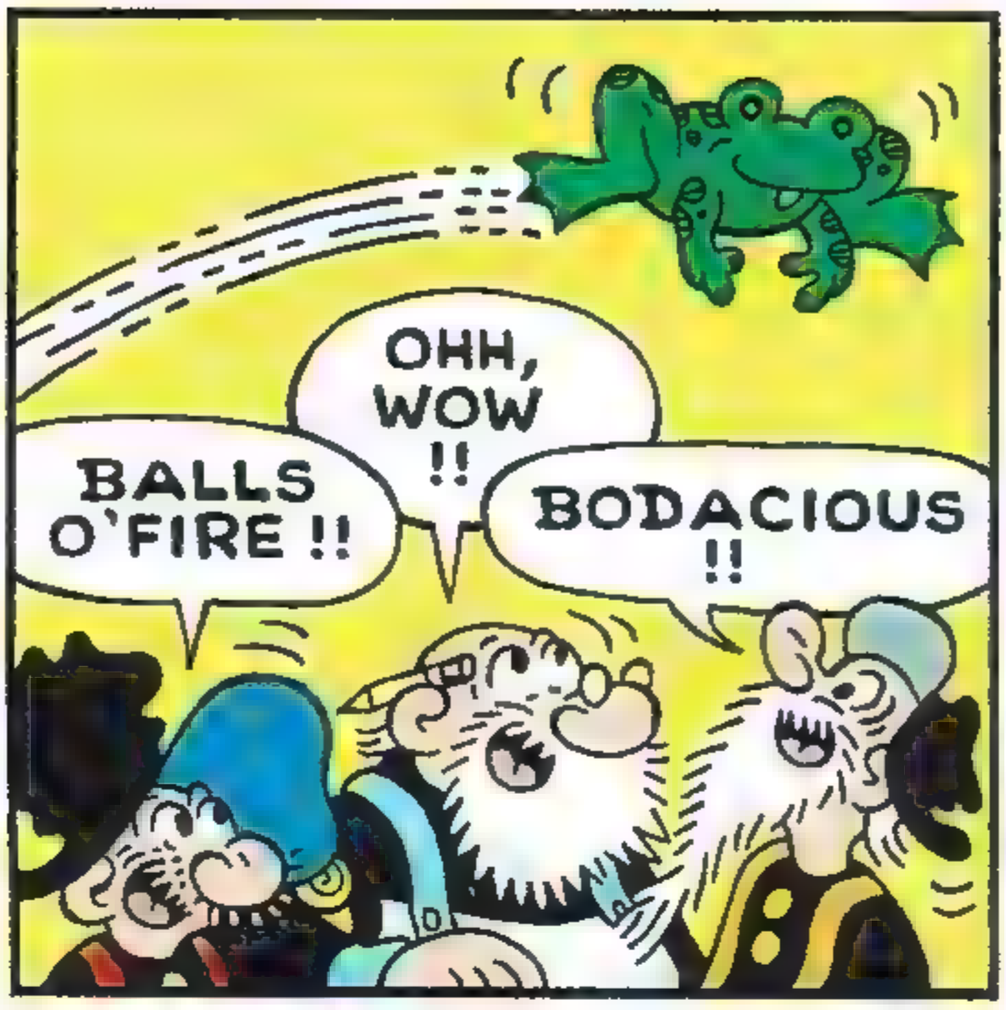
FREDDY ?

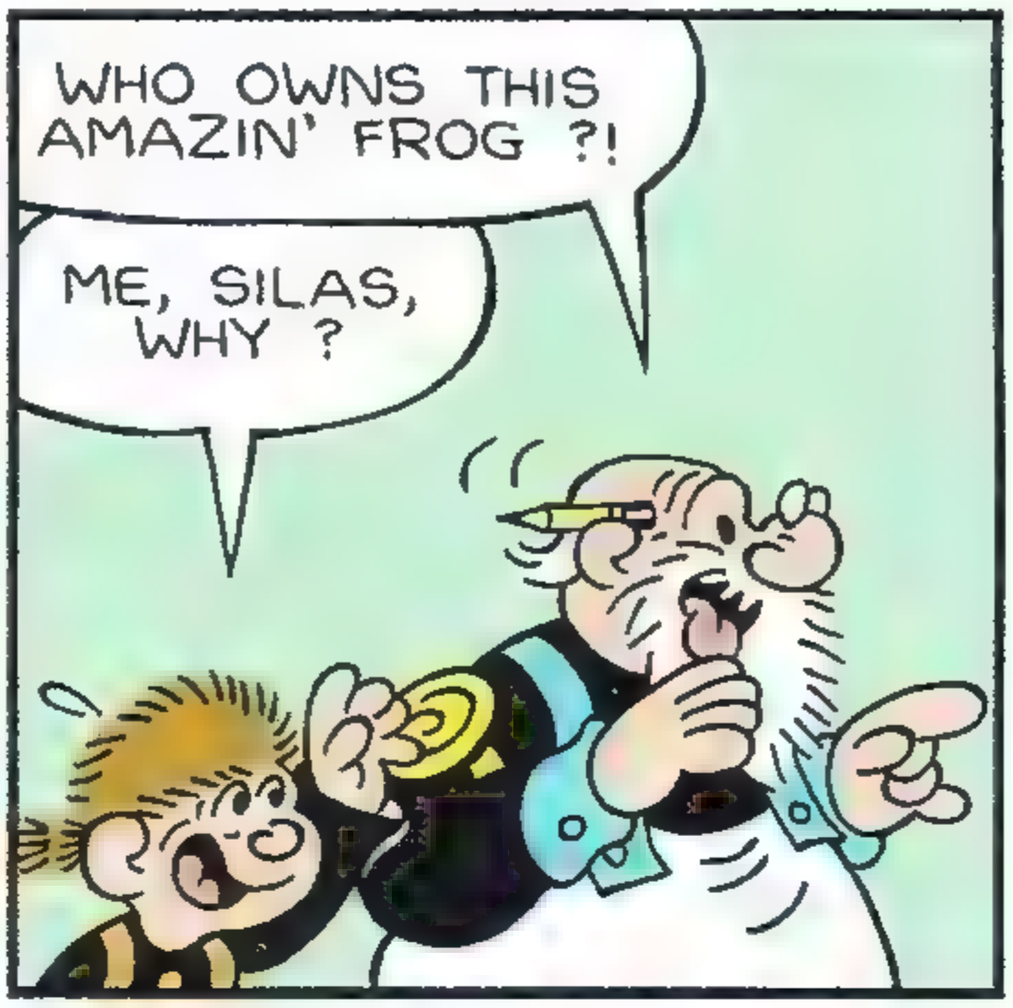

CHOMP, CHOMP !!

SWIM!!
SWIM!!
SWIM!!



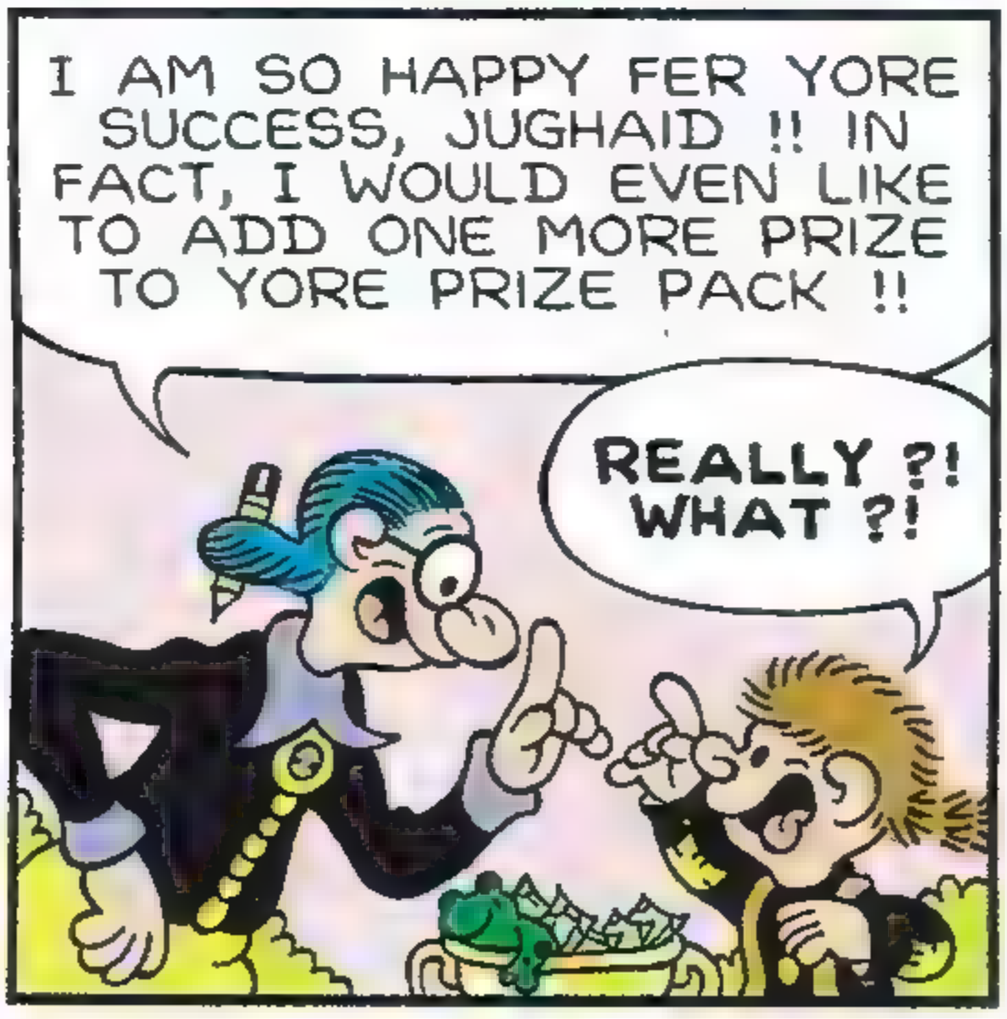
GRAB!
SQUEEZE !!
PTOOEY !!
9


OHH, WOW !!
BALLS O'FIRE !!
BODACIOUS !!


WHO OWNS THIS AMAZIN' FROG ?!
ME, SILAS, WHY ?

CONGRATULATIONS, JUGHAID !! YA JEST WON TH' ANNUAL HOOTIN' HOLLER FROG JUMPIN' CONTEST !!
YA MADE YORE UNKY PROUD !!
N'RAL TORE
ANNUAL HOOTIN' HOLLER FROG JUMPIN' CONTEST

IT COMES WIF A LARGE CASH PRIZE AN' A BODACIOUSLY BIG TROPHY !!
1ST PLACE


I AM SO HAPPY FER YORE SUCCESS, JUGHAID !! IN FACT, I WOULD EVEN LIKE TO ADD ONE MORE PRIZE TO YORE PRIZE PACK !!
REALLY ?! WHAT ?!

TWO MORE WEEKS OF DETENTION !!
TWO WEEKS DETENTION FER LEAVIN' SCHOOL EARLY
1ST
JOHN ROSE
END.
10

RON FRANTZ

Charlton Memories

A long time ago, in a pulp magazine collection far, far away, I discovered . . .

© 2015 Ron Frantz

Space Western™ Comics!

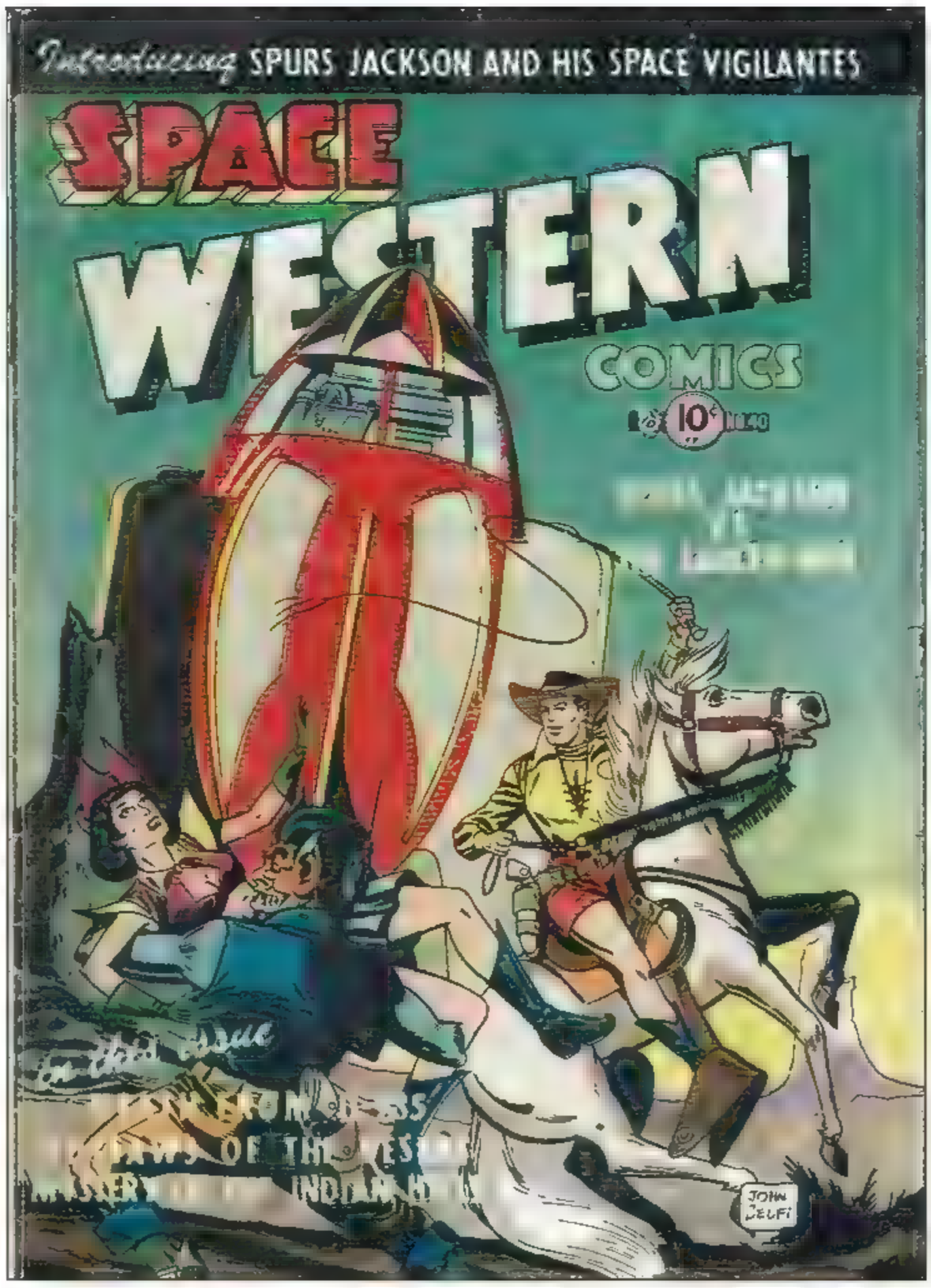
What is life but a series of inspired follies? The difficulty is to find them to do. Never lose a chance: it doesn't come every day.
—George Bernard Shaw, *Pygmalion*

Well, here I am once again writing a new column for *Charlton Spotlight*. Although I never imagined it would happen this way, I am sad to say that many of the old friends and colleagues that I have written about in previous columns are no longer with us. I find myself being the only person still present and accounted for who can vouch for the authenticity of certain events. Mindful that I am writing what some may consider historical commentary, I try very hard to stick to the facts while suppressing the occasional urge to exaggerate. I work mostly from memory, so this is not always the easiest thing to do. I hope you will understand my predicament and allow me some latitude should I appear to wander a little off course while putting my thoughts down. Please keep in mind that any opinions expressed are entirely my own, and should not by any stretch of the imagination be considered gospel.

Now that I've reached the stage of life where I am old enough to collect Social Security, I often find myself reminiscing about matters I have not thought about since the world was young. Admittedly, I have never been much of a philosopher. I suppose the closest I ever get is arriving at the inevitable conclusion that life is full of surprises. Let me just say that while mixing the good with the bad, things have rarely turned out the way I expected them to.

THIS PARTICULAR STORY BEGINS in the late spring of 1979, when my first wife and I were making a car trip from Oklahoma City to Huntsville, Alabama, to visit my friend Robert "Bob" Sampson. At the time I was struggling to write my autobiographical memoir, *Fandom: Confidential*. Any progress I had made up to that point amounted to almost nothing. As a personal favor, Bob had already written a wonderful introduction for the book, and I really hated to bother him with anything else as he was busy working on a book of his own. But the truth be known, I needed all the help I could get. I decided to impose on him one more time and ask if he could look at my incomplete manuscript and possibly offer a few suggestions on what might be done to improve it. He agreed. I mailed him the pages I had already written so he could look them over at his convenience. After Bob had seen the pages, we decided that getting together in person was the best way to tackle the problem.

Bob was a gifted and vastly experienced writer who



The premiere of Spurs Jackson and His Space Vigilantes in Charlton's ***Space Western Comics*** #40 (Sept.-Oct. 1952). Space Western and associated characters TM & © 2015 Ronald J. Frantz and Michael Ambrose.

Bob Sampson as depicted by his good friend Frank Hamilton. Art from ***Fandom: Confidential***, courtesy of Ron Frantz. Art © 2015 Estate of Frank Hamilton.

spent many years researching the history of the pulp magazines. In the process he became a walking encyclopedia on the subject, cheerfully sharing the fruits of his knowledge through dozens of articles published in various collectors' journals of the period. A few years later, his remarkable tome *Yesterday's Faces: A Study of Series Characters in the Early Pulp Magazines*, published by Bowling Green University, laid a foundation for other historians to follow. Along the way Bob accumulated near-complete runs of such popular titles as *Doc Savage, The Shadow, The Avenger, The Phantom Detective, Captain Future, The Spider,* and hundreds of individual issues from every possible genre. Very few collections of that magnitude exist today, and I feel fortunate to have been a guest in his home on several occasions to see it in person. Chances are I will never see the likes of it again.

I first became acquainted with Bob's work when I read his delightful article "Glory Days with the Ace of Space," published in the March 21, 1973, issue of *Stan's Weekly Express.* After little more than the first two paragraphs, I was hooked:

> Once a simpler sun shone. Brave, bronzed heroes rode the spaceways, probed eerie worlds, shot it out with the bad guys. At that time, the Solar System swarmed with life. From the Sun's core to the frozen cliffs of Pluto, civilizations flourished and there was trade, adventure, struggle.
>
> Through this all, riding on blazing jets, reared a splendid hero—Captain Future. Born Curt Newton, he was (is, shall be) young, lithe, red-headed—a fighting, laughing scientific genius. From 1940 through 1951, in 20 novels and and 7 short stories, he was Earth's good champion and defender.

By coincidence, I had recently read a half-dozen or so of the original *Captain Future* stories reprinted in the late 1960s by Pyramid Books. I enjoyed them considerably, and Bob's article merely whetted my appetite for more. Acting entirely on impulse, I decided to give him a phone call to tell him how much I liked his article. Almost instantly, I could sense that he was a warm, gracious man who answered all my questions with the patience of Job. Somewhere in the process we became friends. Afterwards, we corresponded for at least a dozen years. We talked on the phone from time to time when one of us needed a favor or there was some pertinent matter to discuss.

I am proud to say that there were a few times when I was able to help Bob with his research by sending him batches of beat-up old pulp mazines. These were usually Western, romance, or detective titles I picked up for a little of nothing at a local flea market. They were practically worthless for collecting purposes, but as a serious historian Bob found many of them helpful. In a personal letter dated 8/11/84, he writes:

> That box of pulps arrived today. Well, you're right. They are in *extraordinary* shape. And you're right once again, I got all sorts of information out of them, after just a cursory glance. Three checklist additions, a small change to the text of the book I'm working on now, and some information on the issuance of *Complete Detective Novel* that wasn't available before. There will be other bits of fact to come out of this box when I get more time with it. It was worth the buy, and thank you very much. I accept the magazines with great pleasure, but I am enclosing postage on the sensible grounds that there is no reason for you to have to pay off that fat-assed criminal in the Post Office department to do someone else a favor.

Sampson had a wry sense of humor. His letters were a constant source of joy and amusement. Spending time in his company was an occasion not to be missed. Once upon a time we had a lively conversation about the differences between comic book and pulp magazine collectors. It seemed to me that in many respects they didn't have a great deal in common.

"Those damn comic-bookers are crazy," is how Bob described the curious behavior of some comic book collectors. So as not to give anyone the wrong impression, his words were not nearly as harsh as they sound. He said such things with tongue planted firmly in cheek, while his eyes sparkled with gentle good humor. He realized, of course, that the primary difference between pulp and comics collectors was usually a matter of age and maturity. In those days most comics collectors were young men in their late teens or early twenties, while the average pulp collector was usually 20 or 30 years older. Think of it as a generation gap. Although Bob had very little interest in comics, I was a little surprised to see that he had a complete set of the *Asterix* books reposing on his bookshelf. He thought they were hilarious and well done. We were both fans, indicating that pulp and comic book collectors really could share a common interest in literature.

Bob once described *The Shadow* comics published by Archie about 1964 as "a horrid botch of unspeakable drivel." I think he felt genuine contempt for Jerry Siegel's scripts. He saw them as little more than typical "superhero" nonsense, hardly worth reading for anyone much over the age of 10. None of the stories had the slightest bit in common with

A loving tribute to Walter B. Gibson and The Shadow by Frank Hamilton. From Bob Sampson's history of the character, ***The Night Master***, published in 1982 by Pulp Press. Scan courtesy of Ron Frantz. Art © 2015 Estate of Frank Hamilton. The Shadow TM & © 2015 Conde Nast.

the original pulp character. A blind man could see the direction that editor Victor Gorelick had taken while trying to adapt *The Shadow* for comics. Considering the title lasted only eight issues, apparently the kids didn't care much for it, either.

It is fun to speculate on what Charlton might have done with the character had they been afforded the opportunity. Looking at what Charlton did with Tarzan in this same time period might give us some idea. Joe Gill could have done a good job on the scripts. Sam Glanzman and Dick Giordano were more than capable of producing respectable art. Heck, I can even imagine Pete Morisi taking a crack at it. In fact, I think he would have relished the opportunity. Pete had been a fan of the character since he was a youngster.

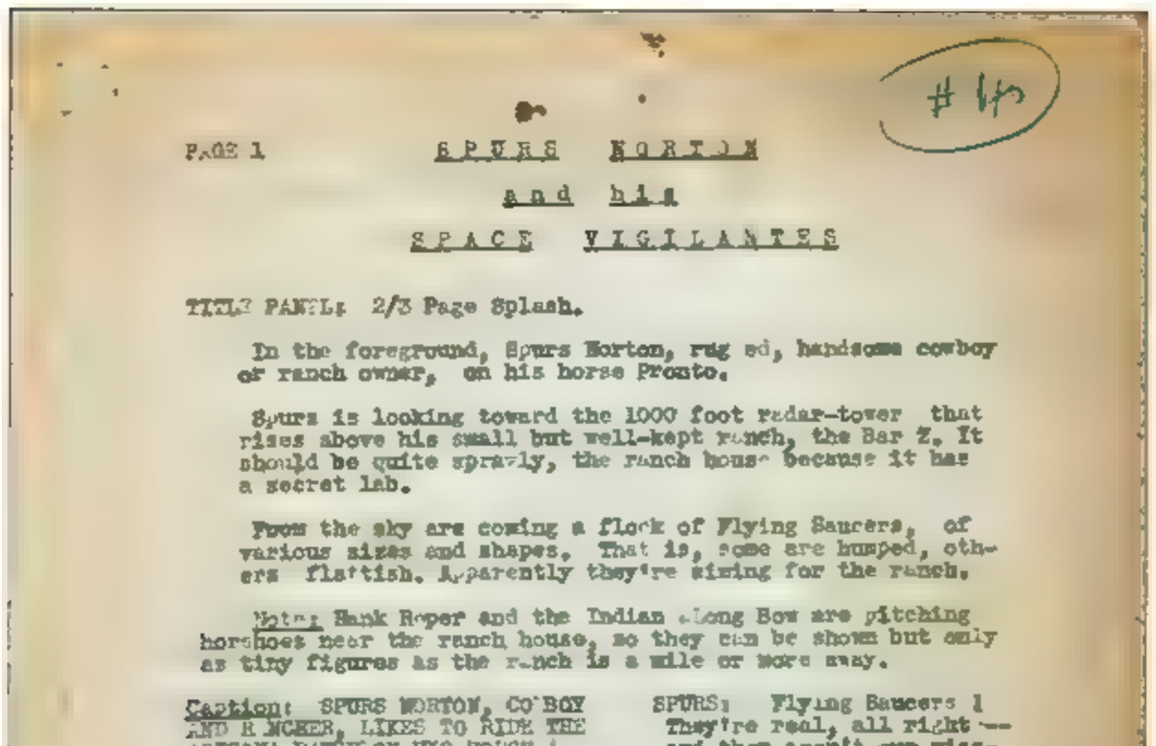
I remember telling Bob during one of our visits that those Archie *Shadow* comics had provided me with my introduction to the character. Hearing that, he sort of cringed, looking as if he had just swallowed a heaping mouthful of cod liver oil. I still get a chuckle every time I recall his pained expression. These are the kind of golden memories that last a lifetime.

GETTING BACK TO THE STORY at hand, my wife and I accepted Bob's invitation to vist. While driving southeast through rural Mississippi and Alabama, we witnessed a bizarre event in Decatur, Alabama. As we were getting closer to the downtown area, I noticed the traffic getting increasingly heavy. Then, without warning, it came to a sudden stop. I knew something had to be going on up ahead. My first thought was the circus was in town, or maybe the Boy Scouts were having some kind of jamboree. I could not have been more wrong. As unbelievable as it might sound, we found ourselves caught smack in the middle of an organized march by the Ku Klux Klan. I kid you not.

There was nowhere to go. We had no choice but to sit at the stoplight and watch the grand parade slowly move along. I had heard stories about the wicked antics of the KKK (just like everyone has heard of typhoid) but never in my wildest imagination did I expect to see them in action. There must have been at least 30 or 40 Klan members marching down the opposite side of the street, wearing white robes and hoods that completely covered their faces. Some waved banners decorated with Klan insignia, while others carried "Rebel" battle flags mounted on long wooden poles. And then, believe it or not, a few of the Klansmen actually held burning torches in front of them with both hands while they marched along to the pounding beat of a bass drum. From where I was sitting, a cohort of goose-stepping Nazi stormtroopers could not have been any more intimidating.

One of the more curious aspects of the spectacle was the large crowd of people swelling on both sides of the street. I guess what disturbed me most was hearing a few idiots actually shouting words of encouragement. Shamefully, much of the rheortic was laced with angry racial slurs, none of which I care to repeat here. Other people in the crowd, no less enthusiastic, were cheering them on as if they were conquering heroes returning from some holy crusade. To make matters worse, there was not a single police officer in sight. I must admit, I had never seen anything like it before, and I hope to never see anything like it again. To say the event was eerie would be putting it mildly. A sociologist would probably describe the scene as a textbook example of mob mentality degenerating into mass hysteria.

I've often thought the situation might have adapted nicely into a television episode of *The Twilight Zone* or *The Alfred Hitchcock Hour*, or perhaps a novel by Stephen King. Years later, when I was publishing my B&W ACE Comics line, I told this tale to Joe Gill, thinking he could turn it



PAGE 1 SPURS NORTON
and his
SPACE VIGILANTES

TITLE PANEL: 2/3 Page Splash.

In the foreground, Spurs Norton, rugged, handsome cowboy or ranch owner, on his horse Pronto.

Spurs is looking toward the 1000 foot radar-tower that rises above his small but well-kept ranch, the Bar Z. It should be quite sprawly, the ranch house because it has a secret lab.

From the sky are coming a flock of Flying Saucers, of various sizes and shapes. That is, some are humped, others flattish. Apparently they're aiming for the ranch.

Note: Hank Roper and the Indian Long Bow are pitching horshoes near the ranch house, so they can be shown but only as tiny figures as the ranch is a mile or more away.

Caption: SPURS NORTON, COWBOY AND RANCHER, LIKES TO RIDE THE ARIZONA RANGE ON HIS HORSE, "PRONTO".... BUT BY PROFESSION, SPURS IS AN ELECTRONIC ENGINEER AND ASTRO-PHYSICIST... HE HAS CHARGE OF A 1000-FOOT RADAR TOWER ERECTED ON HIS RANCH, THE BAR-Z TO CHECK THE FLIGHT OF GUIDED MISSILES NOW BEING PROJECTED FROM EARTH TO THE MOON..

SPURS: Flying Saucers! They're real, all right -- and they aren't our missiles! They must be from another planet..... Come on, Pronto -- we're getting over to the ranch right fast!

PANEL 1: Wide. Scene by the ranch-house. Hank Roper is pointing up at arriving saucers while Long Bow looks. Long Bow is holding a horse-shoe.

HANK: Long Bow, look! Flying Saucers!

LONG BOW: Humph. Long Bow won't believe it.

PANEL 2: Narrow, Wide shot of Long Bow about to pitch horse-shoe.

LONG BOW: Long Bow heard scientists tell Spurs Norton that Flying Saucers are just an illusion. So Long Bow prefers horse-shoes...

The first Spurs Jackson story from ***Space Western Comics*** #40, alongside Gibson's carbon-copy typescript of the story. Note the major character name changes that occurred between Gibson's delivery of the script and John Belfi's rendering of it. Space Western and associated characters TM & © 2015 Ronald J. Frantz and Michael Ambrose.

into a good comic book story. Pete Morisi or Pat Boyette would have been perfect to illustrate it. Joe seemed to think it was a good idea, but we never got around to doing anything with it.

Thanks to the modern miracle we call the Internet (where information on almost any subject becomes instantly available), I recently discovered there was much more to this sordid incident than I could have known about in 1979. What I had seen was apparently only the beginning of a nightmare scenario. After we were long gone from the scene, the situation got a lot worse. At the time the city of Decatur had a jaded history involving the KKK. Documents posted on the Southern Poverty Law Center website [*https://www.splcenter.org*] provide some information about the events that followed:

> In 1979, over 100 members of the Invisible Empire Klan, armed with bats, ax handles and guns, clashed with a group of peaceful civil rights marchers in Decatur, Alabama. Two marchers were shot in the head and face. Others were beaten with clubs and sticks. Forced to flee for their lives, they abandoned plans for a peaceful demonstration and sought safety.
>
> Though the FBI investigated and could not find enough evidence of a conspiracy to charge the Klansmen, the Center filed a civil suit against the Invisible Empire and numerous Klansmen. Center investigators uncovered evidence that convinced the FBI to reopen the case, and nine Klansmen were eventually convicted of criminal charges.

I can't say for certain, but my guess is that the group of hooded Klansman we saw on the street that day were on their way to attack the aforementioned civil rights marchers. The timing sure seems to fit. All I remember thinking at the time was getting the hell out of there before my wife and I became a part of the madness. When the traffic started moving again, we were back on the road in a matter of minutes . . . and we had no desire to look back. The more distance we put between ourselves and the KKK, the better I liked it. Although this happened some 36 years ago, the memory of that day still gives me a cold chill. I've never had the slightest inclination to visit Decatur again. I can only hope things might be a little more civilized there now.

WHEN WE FINALLY ARRIVED at Bob Sampson's home in Huntsville an hour or two later, I couldn't wait to tell him about our experience in Decatur. Bob didn't appear to be too surprised. It looked to me like he had heard stories like that before. Shaking his head with apparent disgust, Bob casually mentioned this sort of thing happened every now and then in that neck of the woods. He didn't seem to think it was anything for us to be concerned about. We just happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time. He suggested we try to forget about it and not let the unpleasantness spoil our visit. It seemed like sensible advice, and somehow we managed to do just that.

On a more positive note, the following morning Bob took us out to visit the U.S. Space and Rocket Center museum in Huntsville. It proved to be a memorable experience. Seeing some of the spacecraft and exhibits commemorating the historic Jupiter and Apollo missions (including actual moon rocks) more than made up for the nightmare we

had witnessed the day before. Since Bob worked at NASA, having him with us was like having our own personal tour guide. Bob had a lot of great stories to tell about the space program, too many for me to absorb in so short a time. Unfortunately, much of what I saw and heard that day is now little more than a hazy memory. It just makes me wish I could go back and do it all over again.

That evening, Bob and I finally got around to discussing my book. At my urging, he spoke his mind and didn't pull any punches. I took it as a compliment that he didn't seem overly concerned with the possibility of hurting my feelings. I guess he knew me well enough to know I admire candor, even if some of it is a little pointed and aimed in my direction. I remember the punch line to an old joke on radio (possibly by Red Skelton): "It ain't slander if it's true."

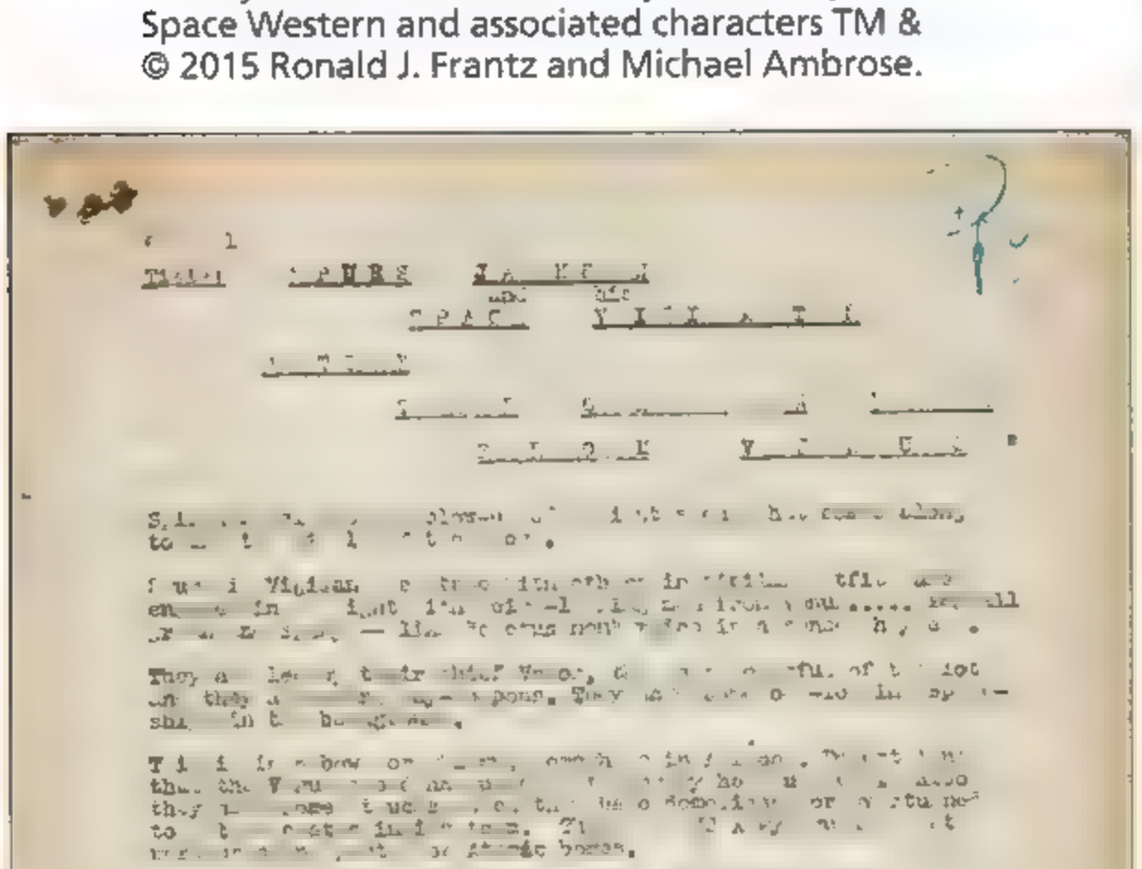
To begin with, Bob thought I was trying too hard to emulate the style of various writers I liked. It is a mistake made by many novice writers. My stuff sounded like someone else had written it. I was failing to develop a style of my own. The funny thing is, now that I have managed to do it I can't write any other way. Nor do I really care to. A few years back some self-styled critic made a few unkind remarks about my style, but I cut him short: I told him I was sorry he didn't like the way I wrote, but at least my style came as the result of many years of hard work. It might not be much, but at least it is mine.

Drinking a few cold beers and smoking some good Nicaraguan cigars, we discussed the not-so-simple mechanics of writing. I had a lot to learn. Among other things, Bob suggested I quit using so many "flowery" adjectives and adverbs and use strong nouns and verbs instead. I needed to shorten my sentences (and paragraphs) and learn how to make every word matter. The main idea is that cutting the word count never hurts. He was of the opinion that a good writer will never confuse his readers by using a lot of big, important-sounding words when a few little words will get the job done.

Bob thought I knew what I was trying to say most of the time but was having difficulty making my point clear. And he was absolutely right. When I got back home, I took a long and serious look at the manuscript. My favorite analogy is that it had all the charm of soured buttermilk. At that point, I decided the best way to go about fixing it was to throw out most of what I had written and start over. I ended up with a much better book, although it took me a very long time to get the job done. All it needed in the end was for a good editor like Mike Ambrose to come along and give it some badly needed spit and polish.

To this very day I experience moments when I feel the need to step back, take a deep breath, and remember Bob's sage advice when I am trying to write. Old habits really do die hard, and don't let anyone tell you otherwise. I probably learned more about journalism and creative writing in the brief time I spent with Bob than I had in two semesters of college study. Looking back, I suspect I never would have become any kind of a writer or publisher without his advice

Lead story from ***Space Western Comics*** #41 (Nov.-Dec. 1952), alongside Gibson's carbon-copy typescript. The series began with a bang and was off and running all over the solar system by the second issue. Art by Stan Campbell. Space Western and associated characters TM & © 2015 Ronald J. Frantz and Michael Ambrose.



SPACE WESTERN COMICS
SPURS JACKSON AND HIS SPACE VIGILANTES
BATTLE THE GREEN MEN OF VENUS
STAN CAMPBELL
THIS STRANGE STORY OF THE NOT-TOO-DISTANT FUTURE BEGAN ON SPURS JACKSON'S ARIZONA RANCH..
YES IT'S AN ATOM-POWERED ONE MAN SPACE SHIP. IF IT TESTS RIGHT, I'LL BUILD A FLEET OF THEM. I'LL NEED YOU AS SPACE VIGILANTES, ONCE INTER-PLANETARY TRAVEL BEGINS.
WE'VE COME HERE TO GET ORGANIZED RIGHT NOW, SPURS!
WE HAVE DEFINITELY DETERMINED THAT THE RECENT SEISMOGRAPH DISTURBANCES ARE NOT DUE TO SUN SPOTS...BUT TO ATOM EXPLOSIONS ON THE PLANET, EARTH!
SUMMON OUR SPACE FLEET. WE'LL ATTEND TO THIS AT ONCE!
SPURS JACKSON WAS PLENTY SHARP WITH HIS PREDICTION. AT THAT VERY MOMENT TROUBLE WAS BREWING ON THE PLANET VENUS!

and help. For this, I will forever be in his debt. A man doesn't get too many friends like that in this life.

I SUPPOSE JUST ABOUT anyone over the age of 40 has heard this: *"Who knows what evil lurks in the hearts of men?* [pregnant pause] *The Shadow knows!"* Indirectly, it can be traced to the typewriter of the late Walter B. Gibson.

As has been said by historians knowing considerably more than I do, Gibson was one of the most prolific writers of the 20th century. His career spanned nearly 70 years. Unlike some writers, he wasn't choosy about assignments. Upon the most basic examination of his credits, one develops the impression that he wrote for anyone willing to pay him. If a subject could be adequately researched, Gibson would write about it with verve and style. His published works number in the thousands, including books, newspaper columns, magazines, radio scripts, pulp novels—and, of course, comic books.

Born in 1897 in Philadelphia, Gibson's first published work appeared in *St. Nicholas Magazine* in 1905. It was a puzzle, crafted at the tender age of eight. Gibson became interested in stage magic early in his life, and he contributed innumerable articles to various semiprofessional magazines devoted to the subject. His first article on magic appeared in *The Sphinx* magazine in 1915, one of 217 articles he would write for that publication. Gibson briefly worked as a carnival magician after graduating from Colgate in 1920. In 1922, he became a reporter for the *Philadelphia North American,* and later the *Evening Ledger.* Soon Gibson branched into a syndicated series of daily features: *Daily After Dinner Tricks, Teasers, Brain Tests, Numerology, Science Questions,* and crossword puzzles.

From the mid-1920s Gibson wrote books and articles on magic. Some were ghosted, while he published others under his own name. This included a five-part autobiography of Thurston in a 1928 issue of *Collier's.* His credits include *The World's Best Book of Magic, Thurston's 200 Tricks You Can Do, Blackstone's Secrets of Magic,* and more.

By 1930, Gibson had been writing professionally for nearly a decade. He completed the book *Houdini's Escapes,* compiled from the magician's unpublished notes, and received permission from the estate to write a companion volume. In 1931 his career took an unexpected turn when Street & Smith published the first issue of *The Shadow, A Detective Magazine.* It featured the first of 282 book-length adventures Gibson would write for the title. Although Gibson had deep experience writing factual material, he had written very little fiction. It presented no problem for him. A professional newspaperman can write just about anything he sets his mind to, with blinding speed. During most of his career, Gibson reportedly wrote an average of a million words a year. It was an unbelievable amount of verbiage coming from one man and one typewriter.

Needless to say, *The Shadow* became a dazzling commercial success. In 1936, the pulp magazine spawned a popular (and long-running) radio show on the Mutual Network starring a young Orson Welles in the title role. After the magazine was discontinued in 1949, Gibson turned to the book field. Needing to keep food on his table, he produced paperbacks by the dozen on such varied subjects as astrology, space travel, dreams, psychology, fortune-telling, pirates, palm-reading, ghosts, horror, the occult, and heaven only knows what else. Gibson also produced vast quantities of true-crime stories for *Official Detective, Inside Detective, Master Detective, Front Page Detective,* and *Timely Detective*. The sheer volume of work had to be daunting, but somewhere in the midst of this beehive of activity Gibson found time to write comic books.

Above: Walter B. Gibson's mighty machine in his office sometime in 1975. Photo by and © 2015 Geoffrey Wynkoop, courtesy of Albert J. Manachino.

Below: The first meeting of the Shadow Secret Society was held July 5, 1975, in conjunction with the 1975 Comic Art Convention at the Commodore Hotel, New York. ***Left to right:*** Luminaries Will Murray, Walter B. Gibson, and Jim Steranko. Photo by and © 2015 Geoffrey Wynkoop, courtesy of Albert J. Manachino.

DURING 1975–76, Bob Sampson wrote several historical articles for Marvel's B&W *Doc Savage* comic magazine. In my opinion, these articles were the only part of the magazine worth reading. As if the movie by

CRIME AND JUSTICE
RADIO PATROL
FOLLOW THE RADIO PATROL IN ANOTHER ONE OF THEIR EXCITING ADVENTURES... AS TEX AND BARRY MEET UP WITH MURDER, ARSON, AND A GANG OF RUTHLESS KILLERS. WHEN THE MEAGER CLUES ARE ADDED UP THEY FIND A GREAT SURPRISE BEHIND IT ALL.
in
"The GAS STATION MURDERS"
JOHN BELFI
I'VE GOT A COUSIN DOWN IN FLORIDA WHO CAN'T PLAY CHECKERS BUT THEY SAY HE KNOWS EVERY THING ABOUT CHESS.
I HATE TO DO THIS TO YOU TEX BUT MY KING IS GOING TO JUMP THREE OF YOUR MEN MAYBE YOU OUGHT TO LEARN MORE ABOUT CHECKERS!
SUDDENLY..
GET OVER TO PERCE'S GAS STATION HALF MILE SOUTH ON HIGHWAY 22A. WE JUST GOT A CALL FROM MRS. PIERCE SHE SOUNDS HYSTERICAL SOMETHING LOOSENED TO HER HUSBAND
WE'RE ON OUR WAY CHIEF JOHN D'ERCE IS A SWELL FELLOW HE SOLD HIS GAS STATION IN THE CITY AND BOUGHT ONE OUT ON THE HIGHWAY.

This page: John Belfi's dynamic splash page to a "Radio Patrol" feature from ***Crime and Justice*** #9 (Sept. 1952). © Charlton Comics Group.

Opposite page: Splash by John Belfi to "Revolt of the Robots" from ***Space Adventures*** #2 (Sept. 1952). © Charlton Comics Group.

George Pal had not been bad enough, Marvel's treatment of the character was even worse. While we were talking about different things relating to old pulp magazines, Bob casually mentioned that Walter Gibson had written quite a number of comic book stories. Bob told me Gibson had written dozens of *Shadow* and *Super Magician* stories for Street & Smith. Apparently the only way Gibson could get a pay raise out of his cheapskate publisher was to produce more work for them. Then, almost as an afterthought, Bob mentioned an obscure title that Gibson had created for Charlton Comics called *Space Western.* I had never heard of it. The title sounded so peculiar that I thought Bob might have been pulling my leg. He wasn't. Bob knew it to be true because he heard it directly from Gibson. You can't do better than to get your information from the original source. While working for Charlton in the early 1950s, Gibson also cranked out scripts for *Racket Squad in Action* and *Space Adventures.* It seems likely he wrote stories for other Charlton titles, but these have yet to be identified.

According to Anthony Tollin, a noted expert on comics, pulps, and old-time radio, Gibson wrote hundreds of comic book scripts for at least 25 different companies. This includes such notables as Street & Smith, Fawcett, Avon, Lev Gleason, DC, Timely, Vital, and many others.

Turning back the clock once again to 1979, I'm not sure if Sampson had yet seen an issue of *Space Western.* I do know that he later acquired a few issues since I saw them during a future visit. As I recall the story, the editor at Charlton (probably Al Fago) asked Gibson to create a new comic book title. He was looking for something new and different. This might have been considered an odd request since most editors are prone to imitate whatever happens to be selling at the moment. (Stan Lee is one of the best examples I can think of). Gibson gave it to him, with stories steeped heavily in space-fantasy featuring "Spurs Jackson and his Space Vigilantes."

Bob casually mentioned that Gibson had reworked the idea from an earlier radio show proposal that didn't sell. I've no reason to doubt it. Gibson had, after all, written his share of radio scripts for *Nick Carter, The Avenger,* and *Blackstone: The Magic Detective,* along with an occasional episode of *The Shadow.* No doubt Gibson was a practical man, a not uncommon trait for a former newspaper reporter. Like bartenders and police officers, most reporters have seen too much in the way of people and problems to take anything less than a pragmatic approach to life and living. Since time is money to a professional writer, Gibson probably figured there was no point in wasting a useable idea.

As a matter of technique, there is really not much difference between writing comic book stories and radio scripts. Instead of giving directions to the actors and director, with sufficient dialogue to simulate action, you describe what the artist is supposed to draw and provide a few necessary captions. It all boils down to essentially the same thing. For Gibson, it probably didn't amount to much more than making a few minor changes here and there, inserting a little more action into the story for visual effect, toning down any excessive dialogue, and bingo, there you have a comic book story. In the case of *Space Western,* Gibson simply used stories he had originally written for radio. Considering Charlton's notorious reputation for paying very poor page rates, there was certainly nothing wrong with his taking a shortcut here and there.

If I had been blessed with one iota of common sense, I would have asked Sampson more questions about Gibson and *Space Western* when I had the chance. But for some reason it didn't seem particularly important to me at the time. And once a golden opportunity like that is missed, you rarely get a second chance. At least that's been the story of my life. As I recall, our conversation drifted into a discussion about the weekly *Argosy* pulp that I had been making a feeble effort to collect. Sadly, both Bob Sampson and Walter Gibson are gone now. Years later, while reflecting on what I might have learned, I feel an overwhelming urge to kick myself. Oh, well. I had no way of knowing that none of this had been in vain, as you will see.

FAST-FORWARD THE STORY by about eight years. In the summer of 1987, I paid a visit to the Charlton headquarters in Derby, Connecticut. I was then publishing ACE Comics and went to discuss a potential distribution deal. I

let them know that I was looking for interesting material to reprint that I could buy for a fair price or, better still, cheap. These were what I called the "dark days." I was struggling to stay in business during the implosion of the direct sales market. A half-dozen distributors had suddenly folded their tents, owing me thousands of dollars that I would never see a penny of. This was making it increasingly difficult for me to pay all of my bills. And it would only get worse.

The general manager at Charlton, Ed Konick, was kind enough to let me search the section of their warehouse containing the remnants of original art and the B&W proofs of comic books Charlton published from 1944 to 1986; or I should say, what remained of them. Putting it mildly, the place was an ungodly mess.

There seemed to be very little in the way of organization. Charlton's proofs were scattered about, covered with dust and indignity. No doubt they had been picked over time and again by entrepreneurs who had been there before me. Most of the good stuff, like the super-hero and science fiction titles, or stories drawn by popular artists, was long gone. Someone had even carted away the *Hot Rods and Racing Cars* proofs (which I had really hoped to find) along with a few romance titles. These were sold off by an enterprising agent and then scattered to the wind. Every now and then I see some of them turning up on eBay or at one of the auction houses, selling for exorbitant prices.

The only way to find anything in all that chaos was to dig in and start looking. It was kind of like rummaging through the back room of a small-town junk store. There are usually wonderful things to be discovered if you don't mind getting your hands a little dirty. That's the way it was for me at Charlton.

I had been digging around for an hour or so, not finding anything of particular interest. Then, off to one side, 20 feet away, I noticed a large pile of scrap paper. Judging from the amount of dust that had accumulated, my guess is that it had been sitting there for months if not years. Like a siren song, I could hear it calling to me, so I started poking around. Then, without warning, I hit pay dirt! There, hidden among old computer printouts and stripped magazine covers, were a few large envelopes containing comic book proofs. One of them was marked in bold letters: ***SPACE WESTERN.***

I couldn't begin to imagine how they had ended up in the middle of a trash pile. Having a bit of a suspicious nature, my first thought was that some unscrupulous person had deliberately tried to hide them, perhaps hoping to sneak them out of the warehouse when no one was looking. From what I could tell, it probably would not have been hard to do. It was much the same with my finding all of Charlton's "Action-Hero" proofs from the 1960s stashed under a pile of Hanna-Barbera funny animal material. Was all this a mere coincidence? I think not.

Based on stories I heard from several reliable sources, I have a pretty good idea who the culprit might have been. Since I don't have a shred of evidence to support my belief, it is probably best that I keep it to myself. I will say, however, this fine fellow had pulled similar stunts while working for several other publishing companies. Each time he moved on to a new job, he left under a cloud of suspicion. A stench of impropriety remained, resulting in bitterness and mistrust that lasted for years after the fact. For all I know, some of it may still be going on. It makes me wonder how Walter Gibson might have written up a "true crime" story like that.

But once I saw the envelope, my memory instantly flashed back to that balmy spring evening a decade earlier when Bob Sampson told me about Gibson creating the title and writing the stories. I couldn't have been happier if I had found an original copy of the Declaration of Independence. With my pulse pounding, I opened the envelope to find the well-preserved original B&W proofs for *Space Western Comics.* They were all there with the exception of one issue. Both then and now, I wondered what happened to it. Maybe it had been lost decades earlier, or shipped off with other material to England, Australia, or South America for reprinting. I guess we will never know the answer, not that it matters much now.

There was not the slightest doubt in my mind that this was something I really wanted to publish. Trying to keep my excitement down to a bare minimum, I marched into Ed Konick's office with the envelope in hand. When I told him I was interested in buying the publishing rights to the title, he looked at me like I was a candidate for a room decorated with rubber wallpaper. Konick examined the proofs with an air of disdain and then said something to the effect of, "Yeah, I remember this. It didn't sell worth a damn! I thought we lost these things years ago. Are you sure you really want this? I think you might find something better if you look around a little more."

Under the circumstances, asking me a question like that was on par with blowing a kiss to a sex fiend. Of course, I didn't feel obliged to tell him Gibson had written the stories. I suspect that, had he known, Konick might not have been quite so willing to work out a deal. So with almost no haggling we agreed on a price. I wrote Charlton a check on the spot as an advance and took the proofs home with me. A formal contract arrived in the mail a few weeks later. I signed and returned it and we had a done deal.

SPACE ADVENTURES
Revolt of the ROBOTS
WE CAN TAKE OFF OUR SPACE HELMETS LATER WHEN THE SATELLITE HAS INTERNAL BREATHERS THAT SUPPLY SYN HEY! ATMOSPHERE
SO THIS IS DEFIUS OUR NEW HOME IT'S LOVELY!
LOVELY? YOU MEAN AFTER WE'VE SPENT A FULL YEAR AMONG THE ROBOTS!
YOU'RE FORGETTING THAT WE HAVE EACH OTHER FOR COMPANY JAK!
FLASH MAIL
THIS NOTE IS FROM GREG DANT MY ASSISTANT WE SAW A CHANCE TO FLAG A PASSING SPACE PIECE SO WE LEFT BEFORE WE ARRIVED HERE
YOU WON'T NEED GREG NOW THAT I'M HERE JAK WHAT ARE THESE THE ROBOT CONTROLS

THE TWO FINE ARTISTS who illustrated most of the stories in *Space Western Comics* were John Belfi and Stan Campbell. Their art is easy to identify because both men usually signed it. Unlike many publishers of the period, Charlton apparently had no problem with letting artists sign their work. Bless them!

Art by John Belfi (1924–1995) begins with the first issue, #40, Oct. 1952. [***Ed. note:*** Space Western Comics *continued its numbering from* Cowboy Western Comics.] From this, we can assume he designed the characters. Belfi is best known in the comics business as an inker. This, no doubt, kept his work in high demand, because a good inker has the uncanny ability to make a bad artist look good and a good artist look great. In this regard, Belfi was one of the best. One publisher who held him in high esteem was Vincent Sullivan at Magazine Enterprises (ME). This is something Mr. Sullivan once told me himself. Between 1949 and 1952, Belfi inked dozens of stories at ME, including lengthy runs on *The Durango Kid* and *Straight Arrow.*

Belfi wasn't exclusive to ME. He worked on such memorable features as *Airboy*, *The Heap*, *Skywolf* (Hillman); *The Spirit*, *Blackhawk*, *Plastic Man* (Quality); *Captain Marvel Jr.* (Fawcett); *Green Lantern*, *Flash*, *Justice Society* (DC); *Daredevil*, *Crimebuster* (Lev Gleason); and *The Black Cat* (Harvey). While trodding the path to greatness, Belfi inked many now legendary artists, including Mac Raboy, Dan Barry, Jack Cole, Lou Fine, Reed Crandall, Will Eisner, Paul Gustafson, Irwin Hasen, and Lee Elias. No matter how you look at it, those were impressive credentials that would have looked damn good in any portfolio. At one time or another, Belfi worked for almost every comics publisher worth mentioning.

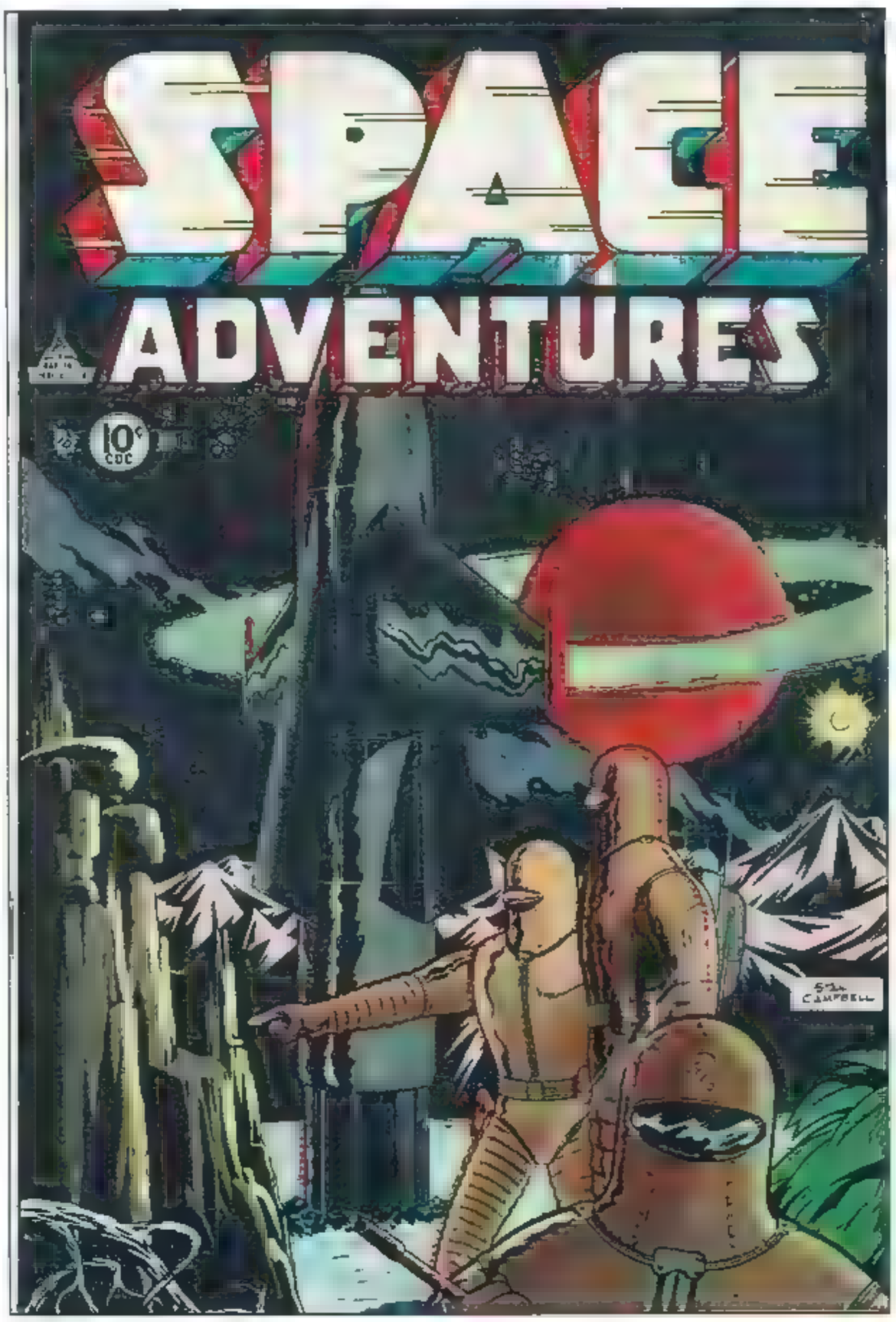
To call him prolific would be an understatement. And he was every bit as versatile as he was prolific. While working at Charlton from 1952 to 1956, he busied himself on such varied features and titles as *Badge of Justice*, *Cowboy Western*, *Lash LaRue*, *Davy Crockett*, *Frontier Scout: Dan'l Boone*, *Lawbreakers Suspense Stories*, *Nyoka the Jungle Girl*, *Racket Squad in Action*, *Ramar of the Jungle*, *Rex Clive, the Space King*, *Spiro the Space Spy*, and let us not forget *Spurs Jackson and His Space Vigilantes*. It is a wonder the man found time to sleep. Charlton editor Al Fago must have adored him.

In later years Belfi became a member of the prestigious National Cartoonists Society and taught at the Joe Kubert School of Cartoon and Graphic Art. In this capacity he passed along his considerable knowledge and experience, helping many of today's well-known comic book artists learn their craft. Judging by what I have read on various Internet discussion groups, many of his former students are especially grateful to Belfi for taking the time to help them with their careers.

Moving along to the life and times of Stan Campbell, I am sad to say that almost nothing is known about his personal life or career before starting at Charlton. We don't even know the years of his birth or death. The best available information hints to Campbell beginning his career at Fawcett sometime in the late 1940s. He turned out some quality work on *Golden Arrow*, *Rocky Lane*, and *Lash LaRue*.

Campbell joined Charlton in 1952. *Space Western Comics* might have been the first feature he worked on. Between 1952 and 1956, Campbell illustrated scads of Western stories for Charlton, in *Annie Oakley*, *Death Valley*, *Masked Raider*, *Cowboy Western*, *Lash LaRue*, *Tex Ritter*, and *Wyatt Earp*. When you add these to a few dozen stories published in Charlton's SF and crime titles, it represents a significant body of work.

It appears that Campbell and Belfi came on board at Charlton about the same time. It makes me wonder if they knew each other. This seems likely considering both men worked on the same titles, often drawing the same characters. It is easy to imagine how they may have compared notes while talking shop. Although you rarely see it men-



Opposite page, top: A fine spot illustration by Stan Campbell for ***Must Be Good Riders: Orphans Preferred,*** by Don Stanford and Vern Baker (Funk & Wagnalls, 1962). © 1962, 2015 Funk & Wagnalls.

Bottom: Campbell's exotic cover for ***Space Adventures*** #5 (Mar. 1953). © Charlton Comics Group.

This page: Campbell's tense splash to "High Card Kills" from ***Crime and Justice*** #8 (July 1952). © Charlton Comics Group

CRIME AND JUSTICE
HIGH CARD KILLS
A
A
GARL DEVERS WAS ELECTED D.A. ON HIS PROMISES TO CLEAN UP THE CITY, STARTING WITH THE BOSS OF THE RACKETS HIMSELF! THE ONLY DRAWBACK WAS THAT THE D.A. HAD NO EVIDENCE WITH WHICH TO FIGHT THE RACKETEERS. BUT GANGLAND'S GUNS WERE ONLY TOO READY AND WILLING TO FIGHT THE D.A.
STAND RIGHT WHERE YOU ARE DEVERS, YOU'RE A PERFECT TARGET!
CAMPBELL

tioned, the comic book industry in those days tended to be a lot more of a fraternity than it is today. Many of the artists knew each another personally, yet stories about the kind of jealousy and backstabbing that was so prevalent in other industries are few. If there was any lingering animosity, it was usually directed at publishers who were getting rich beyond the dreams of avarice while refusing to pay their creative talent a decent living wage. I suppose the moral of this story is that comic book publishers have rarely been known for their lavish generosity.

The day after I found the *Space Western* proofs at Charlton, Frank McLaughlin and I paid a visit to Dick Giordano at his home in Stratford, Connecticut. When I showed them the proofs, both men looked a little surprised. It brought back a lot of memories. Each remembered Campbell, having known and worked with him at Charlton during the '50s. They described him as a long tall Texan who liked to wear cowboy boots, large brass belt buckles, and a ten-gallon hat similar to what Hoot Gibson wore in his old B-Western movies. No doubt he must have stood out like a sore thumb. In those days hardly anyone living near Derby could have passed for a genuine rodeo cowboy. If Campbell had played the guitar and learned to yodel, Hollywood might have been knocking at his door with a million-dollar contract.

Incidentally, Joe Gill remembered Campbell much the same way McLaughlin and Giordano did. Gill thought he was a nice guy, the kind of character newspaper reporters used to refer to as a "colorful personality." Gill talked about those occasions when he and Campbell went out after work to have a few drinks with some of the other people who worked at Charlton. Apparently there was a nearby saloon where they all liked to hang out. Much to my chagrin, I can't remember any of the names Joe mentioned on the phone that day. I must admit that this is another of those situations when I should have been considering the historical implications.

About 1956, Campbell produced some nice art for Dell's *King of the Royal Mounted* and *Mandrake the Magician*. No doubt Dell paid much better than Charlton. For that matter, almost everyone did. On the positive side of the equation, no one working at Charlton ever worried about getting paid. Charlton was as dependable as the sunrise when it came to getting the paychecks out on time. This was a blessing for anyone concerned about paying the rent or feeding his family.

Many of the talented people who produced new story and art for Charlton appreciated how well the company treated them. This was quite a contrast with some competitors who seemed to be overloaded with editors. Some of these despots took a perverse delight in tormenting freelancers or anyone else who made the mistake of wandering through the door looking for work. By all accounts, DC and Gilberton were among the worst. Pete Morisi once told me an interesting story that seems to illustrate the point well:

> I did several jobs for *Classics Illustrated*. The editors there drove me crazy. The first was a three-page filler on mythology. I did the first job, showed the pencils to the editor who said it was fine. I went home, inked the pages, brought them back, and the editor said "fine." I got a check, plus a second job doing some inking and fixing up someone else's work. When I finished that, they handed me my original filler and asked me to change some of the costumes. I said okay, made the changes, returned them, and was told to change some of the hair styles. I made the changes, returned them, and was given a one-page filler to do. I finished that, and was handed my original three-page filler again. This time they wanted some Greek-style buildings in the background changed to a different time period. That's when I blew my cork. It seems they had five (count 'em, five) different editors going over my stuff; a clothing editor, a building editor, etc. Each one of them nit-picking away at my stuff to justify their own jobs. I told the editor: NO MORE CHANGES! I've had it. If you don't like my stuff as it is, I'll buy it back from you and tear it up. It will be worth it just to get out of this

Stan Campbell's colorful covers for ***Space Western Comics*** #41–45 (Nov.-Dec. 1952 to Aug. 1953). The title reverted to ***Cowboy Western Comics*** with #46 (Oct. 1953), which contains two leftover stories featuring Strong Bow and Hank Roper. Space Western and associated characters TM & © 2015 Ronald J. Frantz and Michael Ambrose.

madhouse. He refused to sell it back to me, then offered me more work. But I wanted to have no part of having five editors on my back.

It was a world of difference for Pete when he worked for Charlton. He writes:

> Charlton always left me alone. Do it your way was the standard phrase from editors Pat Masulli, Dick Giordano, and Sal Gentile. Add panels, drop panels, change the story, re-write the endings, we trust you. Quite a compliment, and a situation I never took advantage by hacking out a job. My "rush" jobs were due to deadlines, not intent.

With the absence of any nit-picking editors at Charlton, many creators found it a great place to work. Like Morisi, they remained with the company for decades, often forsaking more prestigious or better paying assignments elsewhere. Call it a sense of loyalty, if nothing else. After all, there really are some things in life more important than making a lot of money. Being relatively free of stress and aggravation and liking what you do for a living is one of them. Then, a few artists like Bill Montes (and Morisi) had full-time jobs elsewhere. Morisi was a New York cop. According to Giordano, Montes worked for one of the New York newspapers as some kind of art director. The casual operation and flexible deadlines at Charlton let them supplement their income with a little moonlighting.

Getting back to Stan Campbell . . . he appears to have left Charlton sometime in 1956, possibly searching for greener pastures. Morisi thought he remembered meeting him somewhere in the distant past but couldn't be certain about where or when. For the next few years, Campbell worked from time to time for Gilberton on their *Classics Illustrated* comics. I guess he must have gotten along better with the management than Morisi did. In 1957, he adapted Sir Walter Scott's novel *Castle Dangerous* in *Classics Illustrated* #141. Between 1957 and 1961, his art appeared in various issues of *CI* and *The World Around Us.*

From 1958 to 1962 Campbell attained some minor success while writing and drawing *The Merriers* newspaper strip. Searching for information about the strip, I discovered there is very little to be had. All I know for certain is that it was published weekly and distributed by a very obscure syndicate known as Eric Jon Associates. If you never heard of this somewhat less than remarkable institution, you are not alone. Since I haven't seen a sample of the strip, I have no idea what it was about. My guess is that it appeared in only a few small newspapers. I sincerely doubt Campbell got rich in the process.

While he was struggling at syndication, Campbell illustrated a few children's books for Funk & Wagnalls. Perhaps the best known is a 1962 book written by Don Stanford and Vern Baker titled *Must Be Good Riders: Orphans Preferred.* It is a story about the Pony Express as seen through the eyes of a young rider. Believe it or not, I actually remember reading this book in the early '60s when I was still in grade school. Campbell's other book credits include *Ski Town* (1958) and *The Singing Cave* (1960). I guess Campbell had come a long way since drawing *Space Western* for Charlton.

Finding himself back at Gilberton for an encore performance in 1968, Campbell drew *The Singing Donkey* for Classics Illustrated Junior. At that point, his story comes to an end. I've never talked to anyone who seems to know what happened to Campbell afterward. It was as if he vanished from the face of the earth, without leaving a trace. The history of comics has its share of unsolved mysteries, and this appears to be one of them. I hate to speculate without knowing any of the facts, but it seems like Campbell's career ended suddenly. Maybe there were personal or health issues involved, or perhaps he just got fed up with art and the publishing business, moved back to Texas, and took up a different line of work. I have no way of knowing, and from what I can tell, neither does anyone else. Too bad, really. He was quite a talent.

ULTIMATELY I WAS UNABLE to publish *Space Western* as a six-issue mini-series as I had planned. Perhaps I was letting my enthusiasm get the better of me, but I gave serious consideration to publishing new material featuring Spurs Jackson and His Space Vigilantes. Just for fun, I asked Bob Sampson if he might be interested in writing a new comic book script, as sort of a tribute to his friend Walter Gibson. Knowing how he felt about comic books in general, I think he had mixed feelings about it. After giving it some thought, Bob said that he would be more comfortable writing a short fiction piece, or perhaps a historical article about Gibson. I told him I would gladly accept anything he might care to contribute. As things worked out, we never progressed much beyond the discussion phase.

By this time Sampson had retired from NASA, pursuing a career as a fiction writer. Thirty years earlier, he'd written a handful of SF stories for various pulp magazines. In 1986, he published "Rain in Pinton County" in *The New Black Mask* #5. The story won the prestigious Edgar award that year for best short story from the Mystery Writers of America. It was a real feather in his cap, and well deserved. The story has since been reprinted in several mystery anthologies. I am sad to say that Bob passed away at the age of 65 in 1992. He was a mentor and a damn good friend, and I miss him.

Incidentally, the artist I had in mind for a new story was Alex Toth. I even thought about Frank Borth if Toth wasn't interested. Some things, however, are simply not meant to be. About six months later, I went out of business, losing my shirt in the process. The *Space Western* proofs were relegated to storage while my life moved on in a different direction.

ONE CURIOUS ASPECT ABOUT *Space Western* circa 1987 is that most well-informed pulp collectors knew little or nothing about it. The knowledge of Gibson's involvement was not much more than rumor. Comic book collectors didn't have the slightest clue either. If the subject was mentioned at all in print, there was never any documentation to substantiate it. This, of course, was subject to change.

Walter Gibson passed away on December 6, 1985. Then, on April 16, 1996, more than 700 lots of Gibson's personal effects were auctioned off in a mammoth estate sale. According to one newspaper account, the bidding was fast and furious. For example, Gibson's writing desk, typewriter, and swivel chair sold for $4,500. Seven issues of *Shadow Comics*, considered a buyer's premium, fetched a winning bid of $1,540. Evidently Gibson was a packrat who held onto almost everything. There were legal papers highlighting Gibson's suit against Street & Smith for rights to The Shadow, which went all the way to the Supreme Court. A letter relinquishing the rights to Gibson sold for $550. Then there were a good number of Gibson's original typewritten scripts for radio shows, comic books, and pulp magazine stories. Unbelievably, this included some of Gibson's original scripts for *Space Western Comics*.

A few years ago, Mike Ambrose greeted me with the splendid news that he had bought all of Gibson's surviving *Space Western* scripts from a Houston dealer. You can probably guess what happened next. Mike knew I had been sitting on the proofs for decades, waiting for an opportunity to do something productive with them. Somewhere in the middle of a telephone conversation, we agreed to team up and publish a book featuring both his material and mine.

Looking at the project from a historical perspective, neither of us is overly concerned about making a fortune. Of course, it would be wonderful to sell 50,000 copies, but being good sensible Charlton collectors, we know this isn't likely to happen. It's possible a book like this has never been published before. If so, its intrinsic historical value cannot be underestimated. Publishing Gibson's original scripts side by side with Charlton's original B&W proofs will provide rare insight to the intellectual and creative process involved with creating comic books during the Golden Age. It will be the closest thing to having actually been there at the time of creation.

We have been biding our time getting the book ready for publication. Both of us have been preoccupied with time-consuming personal matters and other publishing projects. More than anything, it has been a matter of our getting around to doing it. With all of the recent interest in Charlton Comics on eBay, Facebook, and elsewhere, we've decided the time is right to publish. I wish I were in a position to announce an official publication date. We are still working on such petty details as arranging for printing and distribution. Both Mike and I are determined that we will do the job right, or not at all. What I can say now is that we are aiming to have the book appear sometime in 2016. In the meantime, I hope we can depend on your continued interest. I promise it will be well worth the wait!

And before I forget, my thanks and appreciation go to the late Dr. Jerry Bails for the mountain of information I gleaned from his 1973 first edition of *The Who's Who of American Comic Books*. Without it, my research on some of the people and topics discussed in this article would not have amounted to much.

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The Charlton Artists' Art Gallery

selected by Jerry Boyd

THE DRAFTSMEN WHO TOILED FOR the Derby, Connecticut publishing house still inspire us today, not only through their comics and magazine work but also through their special pieces for convention program books and rarely seen commissions. (Okay, I'm still working on getting commissions, but I hope these con illos will do the trick.)

In the 1970s, Charlton artists and writers made their presence known at many a convention across America. During this period, professional and amateur artists provided finished illustrations that would promote their talents and/or their companies' characters. This art gallery presents some of the rarely seen artwork from those days as well as material the artists just wanted to cut loose on.

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CHARLTON NEWS

© Copyright 1974 Charlton Publications,

JULY COMIC CONVENTION ISSUE 1974

WILDMAN SEZ:

E-MAN, YANG ... SUCCESS!

E-MAN

YANG

70

RETURN FROM THE DEAD

CHARLTON 25 COMICS

After nearly a decade of absence from the super hero field Charlton has once again tossed its hat in the ring. Considering the strong foothold that National and Marvel already have in this category, gaining recognition for a new hero indeed seems like a super task.

"We welcome the challenge" says George Wildman, Editor of Charlton Comics. "We're going to take our time and instead of flooding the market with insipid, muscle-bound weirdos we're going to turn out unique polished gems. Both the writer and artist must be inspired by a new concept or the concept will never reach the stands. With E-Man (writer creator Nicola Cuti, artist designer Joe Staton) and Yang (writer creator Joe Gill, artist designer Warren Sattler) we know we have two winners. Fan reactions have been beyond our greatest expectations."

Charlton also puts out books in other categories besides super heroes.

"Our other books include humor, mystery, romance, war and westerns", George Wildman continued. "We have invited all of our artists and writers to attend the convention. Therefore, the fans will get the opportunity to speak to Wayne Howard, Joe Staton, Tom Sutton, Ray Dirgo (Flintstones), Frank Roberge (Pebbles and Bamm Bamm), Tony DiPreta (Great Gazoo), Greg Walker (Sarge Snorkel) and many others. I hope everyone will stop by the Charlton Room not only to speak to our artists but also to collect some free comics. I shall attend as 'Popeye', Our Assistant Editor, Nick Cuti, will also be there and original art from our comics will be on display. Drop in and rap!"

Check your POCKET PROGRAM for our ROOM NUMBER!

OTHER TITLES

EACH SUBSCRIPTION $1.25

HUMOR
BARNEY and BETTY RUBBLE
BEETLE BAILEY
BLONDIE
DINO
FLINTSTONES
GREAT GAZOO
JETSONS
PEBBLES and BAMM BAMM
POPEYE
SARGE SNORKEL
TOP CAT
YOGI BEAR

ARMED SERVICES
ATTACK
FIGHTIN' ARMY
FIGHTIN' MARINES
WAR THEN and NOW

GHOST
GHOST MANOR
GHOSTLY HAUNTS
GHOSTLY TALES
HAUNTED
HAUNTED LOVE
MANY GHOSTS of DR. GRAVES

MIDNIGHT TALES

ROMANCE
CAREER GIRL ROMANCES
FOR LOVERS ONLY
I LOVE YOU
JUST MARRIED
LOVE and ROMANCE
LOVE DIARY
ROMANTIC STORY
SECRET ROMANCE
SWEETHEARTS
TEEN CONFESSIONS
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71

special offer from CHARLTON COMICS WITH EACH SUBSCRIPTION

ONE ISSUE FREE PLUS

The Charlton News from the 1974 New York Comic Art Convention book was certainly exciting. It was a great time to be a Charlton Comics fan, and we're still thrilling over the company's brief return to the world of superheroes more than 40 years later.

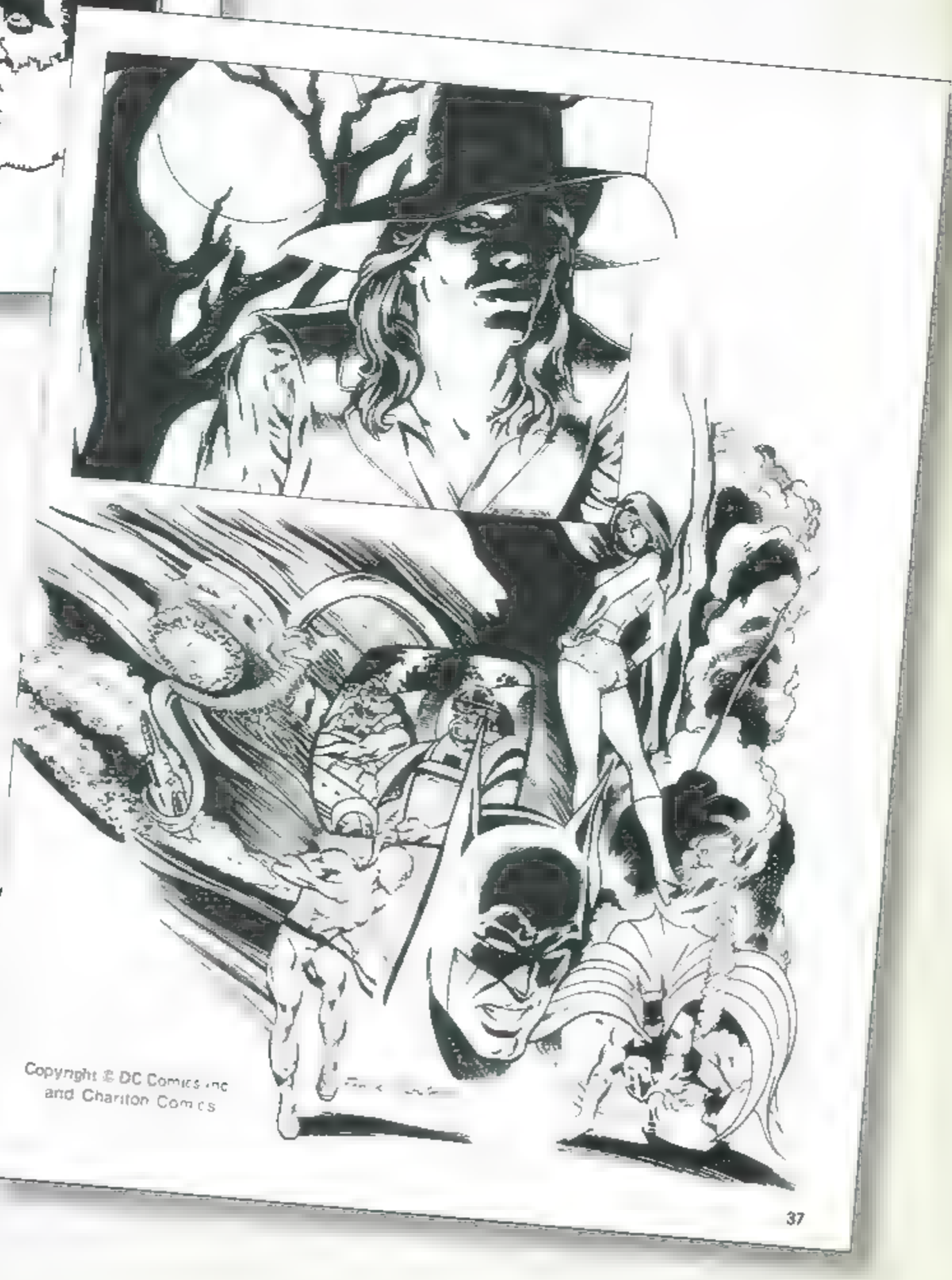
Above: Nicola Cuti's too-cute-and-sexy ***Moonchild*** spiced up the 1974 NY Comic Art Convention book. Moonie © 2015 Nicola Cuti.

Right: From the 1975 New York Comic Art Convention book comes this playful John Byrne sketch of super-fan and Marvel fan-magazine ***FOOM*** editor (and later Marvel inker) Duffy Vohland, wearing an impromptu Moonchild T-shirt. Image courtesy of Howard Leroy Davis.

POPEYE
NUTHIN' KIN SPOIL ME GOOD MOOD!
HAW!
OH MY!
DIDJA SEE THAT AMBUSH OLIVE?
I CERTAINLY D'D POPEYE
IN THE OLD DAYS I WOULDA IMMEDIATELY BELTED HIM BACK...
BUT I DON'T REACK LIKE A BRUTE ANYMORE...
I'VE GIVEN UP VI'LENCE FER TH' SAKE OF VI'LENCE
NOW CORNSIDER ME OPTIONS...DUZ I STRIKE OR HOIST SAIL.
DO I TACK, FURL OR TRIM...
...IN OTHER WORDS I'VE MELLOWED...
I'M PROUD OF YOU SWEETIE!
...BUT NOT THAT MUCH!

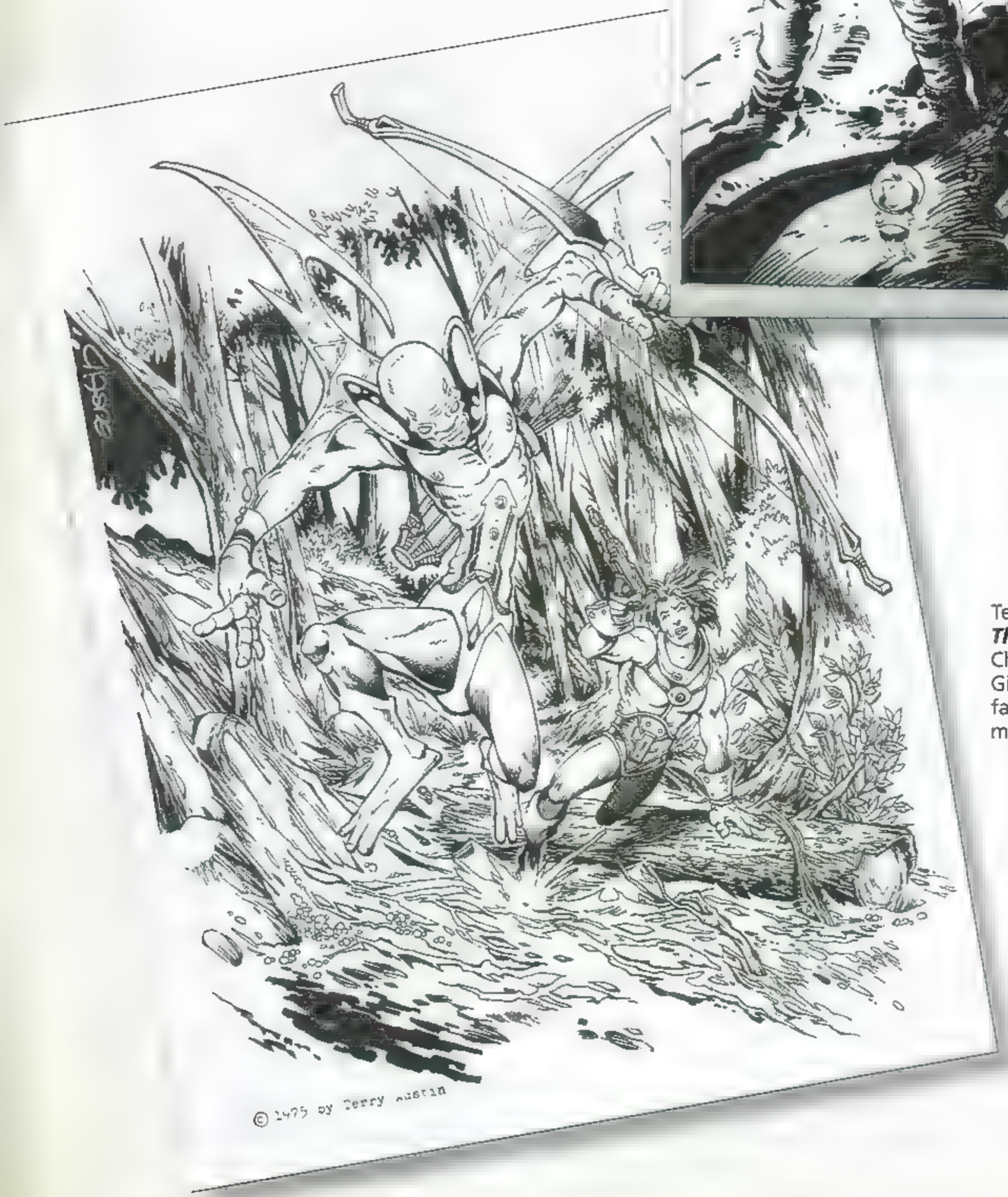
Hy Eisman, interviewed along with George Wildman in ***Charlton Spotlight*** #7, draws the Sunday ***Popeye*** and ***Katzenjammer Kids*** for the newspapers these days. Here's a nice 2007 ***Popeye*** from 2007, courtesy of the artist.

From the "mind" of **Tony Tallarico** comes this self-portrait of the artist with Charlton celebrity stars Abbott and Costello and Bobby Sherman. Yes, that's Super LBJ about to go into battle in the war on poverty. This illustration is from the 1974 ACBA Sketchbook.



Frank McLaughlin provided the bottom portion of this BAYCON III convention booklet from 1977. Judomaster is shown in this rarely seen piece.

This extremely rare Tom Sutton tribute to Wally Wood appeared as the back cover of ***The Comic Artist*** v. 1 #3 (1970), published by Phoenix Enterprises. Wood was, of course, one of Sutton's personal comics gods, as is evident in this lovingly detailed illustration



Terry Austin worked on ***Emergency!*** and ***The Six Million Dollar Man*** magazines for Charlton via Continuity Studios with Dick Giordano and Neal Adams. This nice science-fantasy drawing comes from an unidentified mid-1970s con booklet.

Charlton's Rarest Comic Books

by John Korfel

The top 3 rarest Charlton comics are:

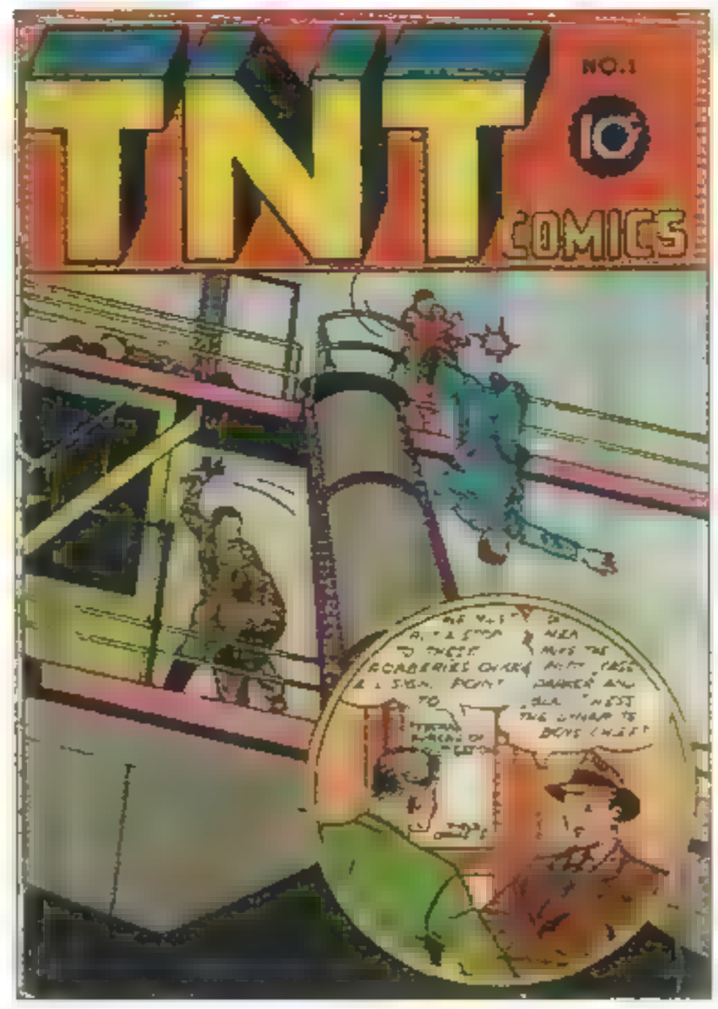
Negro Romance #4 5/55
This Magazine Is Haunted #16 3/54
TNT Comics #1 2/46 E-1

The next 17 rarest Charlton comics rounding out the top 20 are:

Bullseye #7 8/55
Catholic Comics v3 #10 7/49 G-2
From Here to Insanity/Crazy Man Crazy v3 #3 (magazine size) 11/57 L-3 (note 3)
Giant Comics #2 (romance) Fall 1957
Jack in the Box #13 4/47 C-1
Lawbreakers #1 3/51 J-3
Lawbreakers Suspense Stories #11 3/53 K-3
Peter Paul's 4 in 1 Jumbo Comic Book #1 1953(?) K-3 (note 2)
Pictorial Love Stories #25 5/50 C-3
Police Trap #5 7/55
Ronald McDonald v1 #2 11/70 (promo with water ski cover marked "not for resale") O-3
The Thing #12 2/54
This Magazine Is Haunted #15 2/54
Triple Threat #1 10/45 H-1
Unusual Tales #5 9/56
Young Lovers #16 7/56
Zoo Funnies #9 1/47 C-1

The following 102 books complete the list of the rarest Charlton comics:

Atom the Cat #10 12/57
Badge of Justice #22 1/55
Blue Beetle #19 4/55, #20 6/55, #21 8/55
Brenda Starr #14 8/55
Brides in Love #3 4/57, #35 4/63
Catholic Comics v2 #3 12/47, v3 #2 11/48, v3 #5 2/49, v3 #6 3/49; all G-2
Charlie Chan #6 6/55
Cowboy Love #31 8/55
Crime and Justice #18 4/54, #23 3/55, #25 7/55
Danger #13 8/55
Danger and Adventure #23 4/55
Danny Blaze #1 8/55
Death Valley #7 6/55
Fightin' Marines #15 7/55
Fox Hole #5 7/55
Frank Merriwell at Yale #4 1/56
From Here to Insanity/Crazy Man Crazy #11 8/55, v2 #1 (magazine size) 12/55 L-3, v3 #1 4/57 L-3, v3 #2 7/57 L-3, v4 #8 3/59 L-3 (note 3)
Hillbilly Comics #4 7/56
I Love You #12 1/57
In Love #5 5/55
Intimate #2 2/58
Jack-in-the-Box Comics #15 11/47 C-3
Johnny Dynamite #10 6/55, #11 8/55
Just Married #12 2/60, #33 10/63
Kid Montana #25 10/60 (note 1)
Lawbreakers #2 5/51 J-3
Lawbreakers Suspense Stories #12 5/53 K-3, #15 10/53 C-3
Li'l Tomboy #102 1/59
Long John Silver & the Pirates #32 3/57
Love Diary #12 10/60 (note 1)
Mr. Muscles #22 3/56
My Little Margie #51 1/64
Mysteries of Unexplored Worlds #3 7/57
Nature Boy #5 2/57
Never Again #1 8/55
Nurse Betsy Crane #12 8/61
Outlaws of the West #30 3/61
Out of This World #3 3/57
Pictorial Love Stories #26 7/50 C-3
Police Trap #6 7/55
Public Defender in Action #7 3/56, #10 4/57
Racket Squad in Action #2 7/52 J-3
Range Busters #8 5/55
Rocky Lane's Black Jack #28 7/59 M-3
Romantic Secrets #6 2/56
Romantic Story #36 8/57
Scotland Yard #4 3/56
Secrets of Love and Marriage #4 7/57, #11 1/59
Sherlock Holmes #2 3/56
Six-Gun Heroes #58 8/60 M-3 (note 1)
Space Adventures #12 8/54, #19 12/55, #33 3/60
Space Western Comics #42 2/53 K-3
Speed Demons #10 3/58
Strange Suspense Stories #19 7/54, #22 11/54
Sunset Carson #4 1951 C-3
Sweetheart Diary #34 7/56
Sweethearts #122 (#1) 3/54



Tales of the Mysterious Traveler #7 3/58, #10 10/58
Teen-Age Confidential Confessions #22 2/64
Teen Confessions #7 9/60 (note 1)
Teen Secret Diary #11 6/61
Terry and the Pirates #26 6/55, #27 8/55
Texas Rangers in Action #35 9/62
The Thing #15 7/54, #17 11/54
Tim McCoy #16 10/48, #20 6/49; both C-3
Tom Cat #5 8/56
True Life Secrets #4 11/51 N-3, #5 1/52 N-3, #8 7/52 N-3, #25 3/55
Unusual Tales #4 7/56
Wild Bill Hickok #72 5/59 M-3
Wild Frontier #7 4/57
Yellowjacket #9 4/46 B-1
Young Lovers #18 5/57
Za Za the Mystic #10 4/56
Zoo Funnies #6 7/46 C-1, #15 1/48 C-3

Note 1—*Charlton (Mis)Printing Event of 1960:* Approximately 65 issues of 36 different titles with cover dates from March to October 1960 were misprinted. These errors included contents not matching covers, blank inside covers, contents stapled upside down, and covers printed with only partial color. Several hundred of these error books which found their way out of the Charlton printing plant have been discovered. It is unknown how many of these titles were eventually republished without the errors, and all books over those dates are scarce to rare.

Note 2—*Peter Paul's 4 in 1 Promo:* *Peter Paul's 4 in 1 Jumbo Comic Book* #1 was available via mail for 25 cents and contains these four rebound coverless Charlton comics having Oct., Nov. & Dec. 1952 cover dates: *Racket Squad in Action* #3, *Space Adventures* #3, *Crime and Justice* #10, and *Space Western Comics* #41. Contains reference inside to American Comics Corporation of Ansonia, CT. Issue #2 was planned but never published.

Note 3—*Title Name Change Clarification:* Price guides have always shown *Eh!, From Here to Insanity, Crazy Man Crazy,* and *This Magazine Is Crazy* as separate titles, when, in fact, it was a somewhat dysfunctional, continuous run. Adding to the confusion, the 4 titles switched from comic book size to magazine size back to comic book size back to magazine size, switching once even within its own title.

Unless otherwise noted, all comics were published by Charlton Comics Group at the Charlton Building on Division Street in Derby, CT. Those published elsewhere are noted after the date for each issue by identifying the publisher and location in the format **P-L,** using the keys below:

Publisher
A: the Frank Comunale Publishing Co.
B: the Frank Publishing Co.
C: Charlton Comics Inc.
D: Children's Comic Publishers Inc.
E: Charles Publishing Co.
F: Charlton Publications Inc.
G: Catholic Publications Inc.
H: Special Action Comics Inc.
I: Charlton Comics Group
J: Law and Order Magazines Inc.
K: Capitol Stories Inc.
L: Humor Magazines Inc.
M: Charlton Royal Comics Inc.
N: Romantic Love Stories Inc.
O: Charlton Press Inc.

Location
1: 49 Hawkins Street, Derby, CT
2: 17 Elizabeth Street, Derby, CT
3: Charlton Building, Derby, CT
4: Catholic Publications Building, Derby, CT

JOHN KORFEL has been a devoted and exclusive Charlton collector of all their material, including comic books, for more than 37 years. In 2014, he reached his goal of obtaining every single comic book ever published by Charlton, from 1944 to 1986: over 6,300 different issues. It's this multi-decade journey that has enabled him to create this listing of **Charlton's Rarest Comic Books.**

During the 1970s and '80s John was able to purchase all available Charlton material offered to him. His occupation afforded him the unique opportunity to travel daily throughout the East Coast and buy tens of thousands of Charltons, which were perceived to be of little value, or little interest, to dealers and collectors alike.

John is still buying Charlton magazines, music records, puzzles, artwork, posters, and any miscellaneous items associated with the history of Charlton. He can be contacted at:

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New Hartford
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The Division Street Ramble

Editor's News & Notes ***About Our Contributors***

Michael Ambrose, *Editor*

Charlton Spotlight (formerly ***Hot Rods Inaction***) Vol. 1, No. 9 • Winter Solstice 2015
"Buy Charlton Spotlight*—We Need the Money!"*

AS A CHARLTON completist, I gotta like something about every single comic book the company ever put out, be it a random *Romantic Story* from the Gill/Colletta/Nicholas & Alascia assembly line or a certified one-off masterpiece like Steve Ditko's *Mysterious Suspense* #1. Fortunately, there's plenty of great stuff to discuss about the comics the second-tier publisher produced in its 40-odd years. Whether remembering Pat Boyette in the very first issue of *Charlton Spotlight*, 15 years ago, or offering brand-new full-color comics stories by original Charlton creators, featuring original Charlton characters, in *Charlton Spotlight Comics* #1 and *Spotlight* #9—which you now hold in your fevered hands—we've yet to run out of interesting Charlton topics to explore. That, after all, is our motto: exploring the history of the Charlton Comics Group . . . even if it does take me a couple of years to get a new issue out. I hope you will find this new #9 as rewarding as the last eight. Please let me know what you think!

Charlton war comics writer **Will Franz** worked for three Charlton editors—Dick Giordano, Sal Gentile, and George Wildman—during his brief but bright comics career. How many Charlton creators are still around of whom we can say that? As a kid in the 1960s, I always had a few Charlton war comics in the pile along with the odd Marvel, DC, Classics Illustrated, Gold Key, Harvey and what not, but I have to say I don't think I encountered "The Lonely War of Capt. Willy Schultz" or "The Iron Corporal" in those days. I had to discover those series years later. I was always a big fan of Charlton's war comics, so it gives me particular pleasure to present **Richard Arndt's** fascinating, in-depth interview with Will. (This conversation was originally recorded in 2006 but has been updated and reviewed by both Will and Richard.) It's also gratifying to showcase so much of **Sam Glanzman's** gritty, action-filled art in these pages. Sam's Charlton career was long and prolific, but his collaborations with Will were, I think, especially wonderful.

Sam Glanzman continues to create and publish. In 2015 Dover Publications reissued ***A Sailor's Story*** in a handsome full-color trade paperback edition and will be gathering all of Sam's ***Attu*** and ***U.S.S. Stevens*** stories in similar volumes in 2016. The latter will include a brand-new *Stevens* story by Sam! Check out Sam Glanzman on Facebook for news and updates.

Charlton acquired the **King Features** comic book license in 1967, after King abandoned its own King Comics line. The deal with KFS had been brokered by Dick Giordano before he left the Charlton Comics editorial chair in December of that year. New issues of *Beetle Bailey, Blondie, Popeye, Phantom, Flash Gordon,* and *Jungle Jim* appeared with issues cover-dated February 1969. *Hi and Lois, Ponytail, Tiger,* and *Barney Google and Snuffy Smith* soon followed.

Charlton was no stranger to adapting licensed properties. From 1948 on, it published comics featuring B-movie Western stars like Tim McCoy and Sunset Carson. Its licensed line expanded after 1955, with comic strip reprints of *Bo, Brenda Starr, Terry and the Pirates*, and from TV and film, all-new stories of *My Little Margie, Gorgo, Konga,* and *Marco Polo*. But none of these was remotely in the top tier until the company inked its deal with King. New distribution and merchandising doors suddenly opened for Charlton. Further deals from 1970 on, chiefly with Hanna-Barbera, would for a while make the company the top publisher of licensed comics properties.

Charlton's new ***Snuffy Smith*** series was the first since a 1964 Gold Key one-shot, preceded by issues from Toby Press in the 1950s and a few Dell Four Color comics in the '40s. Charlton published a total of six issues, cover-dated March 1970 to January 1971. **John Rose's** "Hopalong Jughaid" marks the first new *Snuffy* comic book story in 45 years! And high time, I'd say. It was a pure pleasure working with John on this project. I hope you all enjoy this landmark offering. It really does take you back to those carefree Charlton days of 1970, when comics were cheap, plentiful, colorful, and just plain *fun*.

Speaking of fun, what about a brand-new **Atomic Rabbit** story by **George Wildman?** George drew several issues of the radioactive rabbit in his earliest work for Charlton in the late 1950s (when the character sported the modified name Atomic Bunny). Last year, George reprised his work on Charlton's **Timmy the Timid Ghost** with two stories, in collaboration with **Donnie Pitchford,** for *Charlton Spotlight Comics* #1. The second story costarred Atomic Rabbit. Now George returns in equally fine form on a new AR story, again with Donnie. You just can't keep a good Charlton artist-editor down, as George continues to produce new work, from custom "Brother George" Christmas tree ornaments to instructional videos in collaboration with son Karl. **Donnie,** of course, is the multitalented writer-artist of the "Lum and Abner" comic strip and has published two volumes of collected strips so far. See his ad on our back cover and order those books now, hear?

One of my singular pleasures in publishing this magazine is reading each of **Ron Frantz's** "Charlton Memories" columns, which have been a mainstay here since the very first issue in 2000. His latest is his greatest. You'll have to enjoy it for yourself to discover the news about the next big thing coming from Argo Press. Meanwhile, Ron has several other new projects in the works in collaboration with author and all-

IN MEMORIAM

We sadly note the passing of the following Charlton Comics folks.

CARRIE SANTANGELO
wife of John Santangelo, Sr.
Dec. 26, 1921–Feb. 12, 2012

DICK AYERS
Apr. 28, 1924–May 4, 2014

EARL NOREM
Apr. 17, 1923–June 19, 2015

ALAN KUPPERBERG
May 18, 1953–July 16, 2015

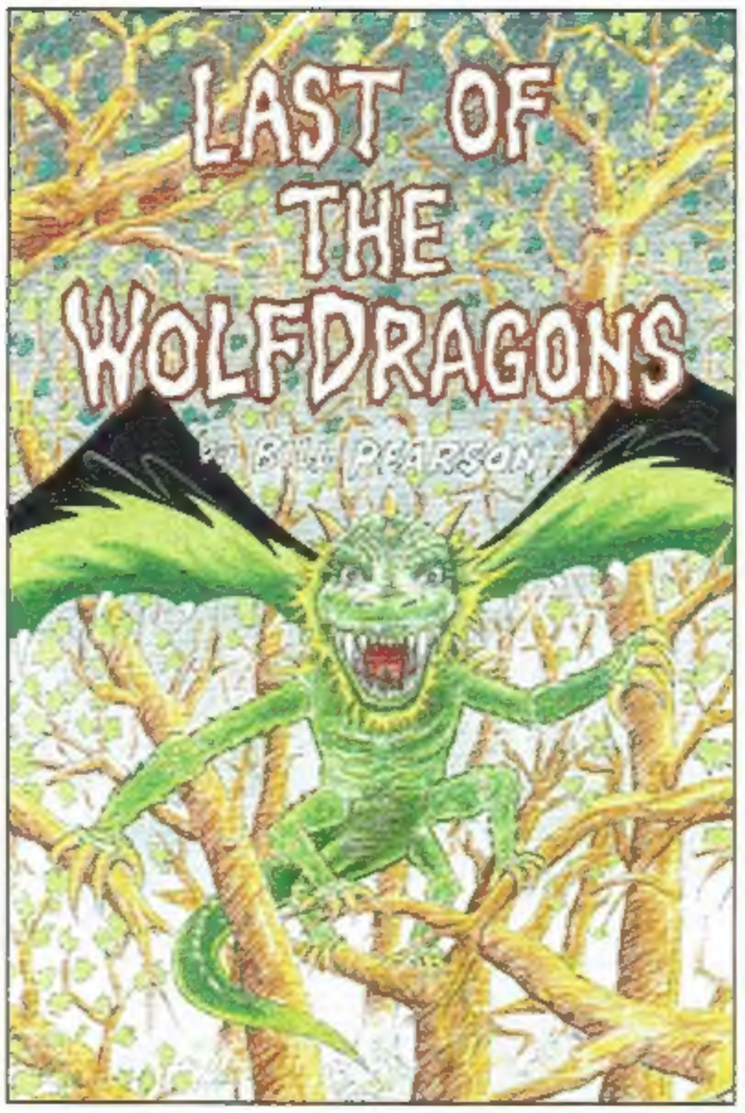
around raconteur **Brian K. Morris.** Visit Ron's and Brian's Facebook pages for more details.

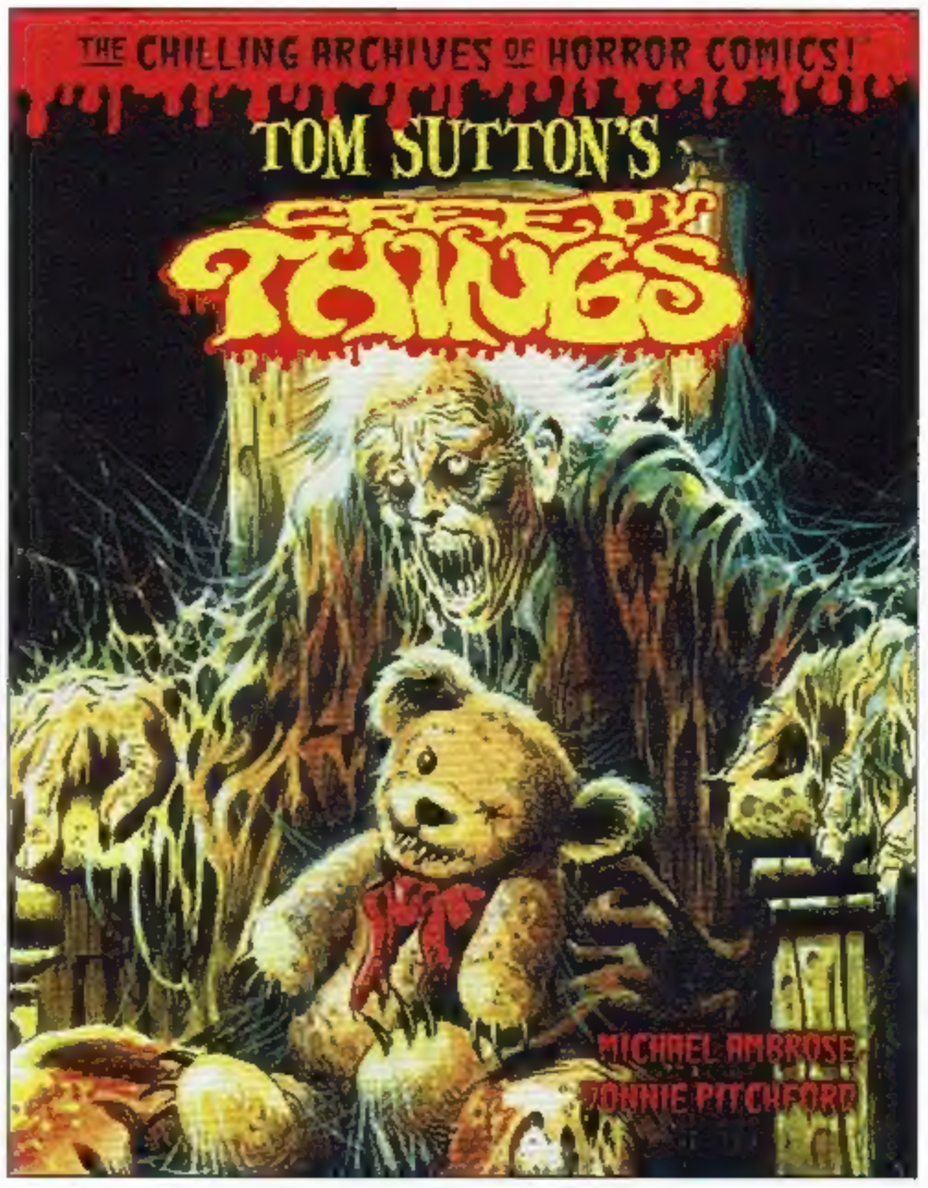
Jerry Boyd has been a supporter of this magazine for many years, and it's a pleasure to have him on board as a contributor at last. His Charlton art gallery offers a glimpse of some rarely seen vintage material from artists who helped make that company great in its 1970s heyday. Likewise, **John Korfel's** list of the rarest Charlton comics is going to make more than a few collectors happy with its detailed, verified publication data. I look forward to learning from John about Charlton's more obscure early publications—for example, the Catholic Comics connection—in a future issue.

Bill Pearson, erstwhile Charlton comics assitant editor and writer, has published a new science fiction novel, ***Last of the Wolfdragons,*** available in a variety of print formats from Xlibris and as an e-book from Amazon. As with all of Bill's books, I can't recommend it highly enough. Buy it now.

Tom Sutton's Creepy Things, co-edited by **Michael Ambrose** and **Donnie Pitchford,** appeared earlier in 2015 in Craig Yoe's Chilling Archives of Horror Comics series published by IDW. Naturally, I urge you all to rush out and buy this book immediately. Fronted with an in-depth introduction by yours truly, accompanied by rare photos and art, the book collects a full frightful 16 of Sutton's best spooky stories from Charlton's ghost comics of the 1970s, remastered from the original published comics—and with many pages reproduced from original art. If you're a Tom Sutton fan (and if not, this book may just make you one), this is the book for you! Check out our Facebook page for the book for a glimpse at before-and-after restoration images, more rare and unpublished photos and art, etcetera!

Fester Faceplant, Mort Todd, Paul Kupperberg, Roger McKenzie and the other folks at **Charlton Neo Media** have been busy with their own Charlton Comics revival over the past couple years. To date they've published four issues of the *Charlton Arrow* and several companion comics, including the brand-new *Steve Ditko's Weird Comics, Unusual Suspense,* and more. See the ad on the next page, and buy 'em all at **http://morttodd.com**.





Charlton Comics: The Movie is a planned feature length documentary film that tells the humorous, tragic and simply amazing story of Charlton Comics, Derby, CT's infamous comic book company that launched Marvel and DC Comics creative legends. More info about *Charlton Comics: The Movie* can be found online at:

www.charltonmovie.com
http://www.twitter.com/charltonmovie
www.facebook.com/charltonmovie
www.pinterest.com/charltonmovie, *and*
www.instagram.com/charltonmovie

This sure sounds like a project worthy of our support!

—Michael Ambrose

ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTORS

RICHARD ARNDT is a librarian and comics historian living in Nevada. His articles and interviews have appeared in *Alter Ego*, *Comic Book Creator*, *Back Issue*, *From the Tomb*, *Spooky,* and now *Charlton Spotlight*. He is the author of several books, including *Horror Comics in Black and White*, *The Star*Reach Companion* and the upcoming *American War Comics: The Real Big Five*—coauthored with Steven Fears. Contact him at **richarda39@hotmail.com**.

JERRY BOYD is a professional schoolteacher and an aspiring screenwriter living in northern California. He's written numerous articles and conducted interviews for *The Jack Kirby Collector*, *Back Issue*, *Alter Ego*, *Spooky*, and *The Harveyville Fun Times!* In addition, Jerry has provided material for comics-based documentaries and written information for the Flesk Publications book about the artwork of Steve Rude. Jerry's been a fan of *Charlton Spotlight* since its fourth issue and is proud to be a contributor.

NICOLA CUTI is a writer, artist and filmmaker living on the Florida Gulf coast. He has written and edited comics for Warren, Charlton, Marvel, DC, and many others and is best known as the cocreator, with Joe Staton, of E-Man. Nick spent 16 years in Hollywood animation as a background designer on such projects as *Gargoyles*, *Defenders of the Earth*, *Exo-Squad*, and *101 Dalmations*. Nick's last movie project was *Moonie and the Spider Queen, Episode One,* available at **MoonieAndTheSpiderQueen.com**. He and his business partner, Nikoma DeMitro, are working on a full-length Moonie movie, *Too Many Moons.* Contact Nick at **space.opera@yahoo.com**.

RON FRANTZ says: "My wife and I have been living in Polk County, Arkansas these past 17 years. I keep trying to pass myself off as a country gentleman by working weekends at a local flea market. In addition to *CS,* I currently have a new book in the works. By popular request, it expands upon the article I wrote for *Ditkomania* back in 2013. It gives me the opportunity to cover aspects about my days of publishing ACE Comics and working with Steve Ditko (and others) that space limitations prevented me from elaborating upon in that journal. Look for more details sometime in the not too distant future."

Born and raised in Brooklyn, NY, **WILL FRANZ** has always enjoyed drawing and history. Unable to attend high school because of health issues, Will contacted artist Sam Glanzman and Charlton editor Dick Giordano, who both liked his writing. As the

Vietnam War intensified, Will was dropped from Charlton. Seemingly barred from further publication elsewhere at the time, Will moved forward, becoming a fencing master specializing in historical swordplay and military reenactment. Working in commercial art, education, and city government, Will currently works part-time for a nonprofit organization for people with disabilities as a programming coordinator and writing instructor.

JOHN KORFEL is the only person on this planet known to possess a complete collection of Charlton comic books.

DONNIE PITCHFORD produces the weekly *Lum and Abner* comic strip and audio feature, available at **www.lumandabnersociety.org** and **www.gocomics.com/lum-and-abner**. To date, two book collections of *Lum and Abner* have been released by Diogenes Press. With Michael Ambrose, Donnie co-edited and produced *Tom Sutton's Creepy Things* for Yoe Books/IDW Publishing and has contributed numerous interviews, paintings, stories, letters, inks, and colors to *Spotlight*. He has created illustrations for the children's stories *Larry Loves His Dictionary* and *The Little Yellow Songbird Sings* for authors Robert and Amy Flood. Donnie is a member of Texas Cartoonists and the National Cartoonists Society. He lives in Carthage, TX, where he and his wife Laura are members of First United Methodist Church.

JOHN ROSE has worked on the *Barney Google and Snuffy Smith* comic strip since 1998, starting as Fred Lasswell's inking assistant and then becoming the strip's cartoonist in 2001, after Lasswell's death. Rose is only the third creator to helm this classic American comic strip since Billy DeBeck launched it in 1919 and Fred Lasswell continued it in 1942. John's first *Snuffy Smith* book, *The Bodacious Best of Snuffy Smith*, was published in 2013 with over 350 of his favorite *Snuffy* strips. His second book, *Balls of Fire! More Snuffy Smith Comics*, will appear mid-2016 in a similar format. John enjoys meeting *Snuffy Smith* readers and does frequent cartooning chalk talks for civic organizations, corporate groups, schools, and festivals. An award-winning editorial cartoonist, Rose is a member of both the National Cartoonists Society and the American Association of Editorial Cartoonists. He lives with his wife, Karen, and daughters, Meredith and Sarah, in Harrisonburg, VA.

GEORGE WILDMAN began his Charlton career in the late 1950s, and in 1969 began drawing *Popeye*, eventually succeeding Sal Gentile as Charlton Comics editor in 1971. Post-Charlton, George has had a prolific career illustrating children's books and magazines. See *Charlton Spotlight* #7 for a fuller treatment of George's life and career and *Charlton Spotlight Comics* #1 for his latest comics work. Contact him at **www.wildtoonz.com** (don't forget the "z"!).

USS Sperry AS-12
1942

—— • ——

IN MEMORY OF

ALBERT J. MANACHINO

Mar. 21, 1924 – Feb. 28, 2015

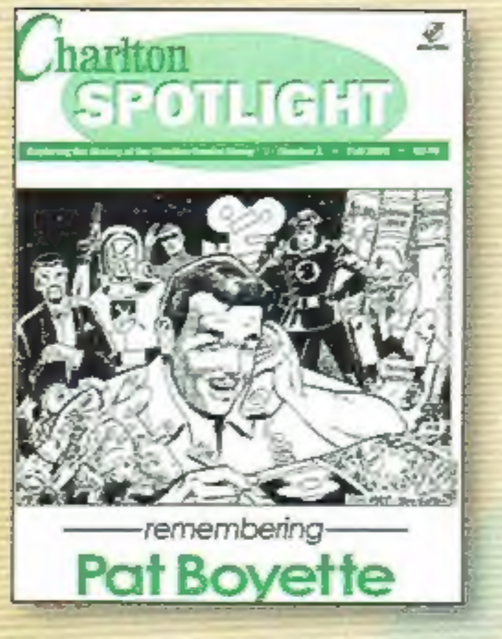
Friend and Mentor

"Keep plugging."

—— • ——

Charlton SPOTLIGHT

All about the wonderful world of the **Charlton Comics Group,** from *Abbott and Costello* to *Zoo Funnies* and everything in between! ***Complete your collection today!***



***Charlton Spotlight* #1** (Fall 2000) **Pat Boyette tribute**
Joe Gill, Steve Skeates, Alex Toth, Bill Pearson, Jim Amash, Ron Frantz, Don Mangus, & more • biography, bibliography, comics & film checklist • cover gallery • complete Charlton Comics title checklist • front cover by Tom Sutton • back cover by Jim Amash • 4th printing, 48 pages, **$6.95**

***Charlton Spotlight* #2** (Summer 2002) **Charlton summer fun**
Interview with AC Comics' Bill Black • Ron Frantz visits Steve Ditko & Charlton Press • more Boyette, with unpublished Peacemaker art • Ron Fortier & Gary Kato on Mr. Jigsaw • classic 1950s Joe Shuster reprint • Charlton yearly checklist, pt. 1 • front cover montage • back cover by John Buscema • 2nd printing, 40 pages, **$5.95**

"A wonderful magazine."
—Roy Thomas
Alter Ego

"One of my favorite publications."
—Bill Schelly
Hamster Press

"Holy crap—I ***love*** *this magazine!"*
—Brett Warnock
Top Shelf Productions

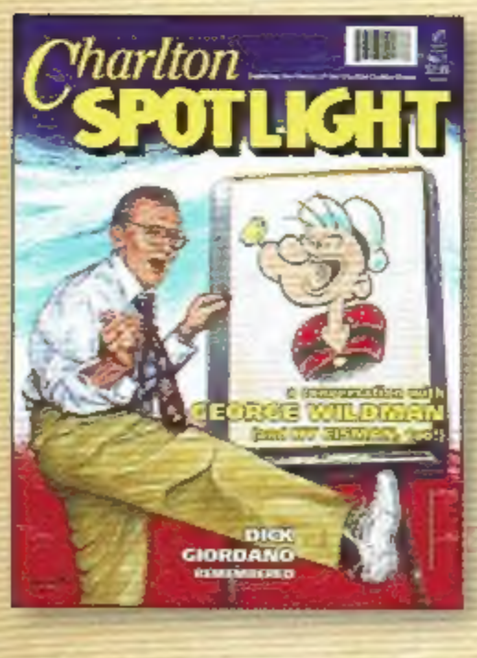
***Charlton Spotlight* #3** (Spring 2004) **Tom Sutton tribute**
Steve Skeates, Nicola Cuti, Bill Pearson, Batton Lash, Jim Amash, Bhob Stewart, Steve Fiorilla, & Stefan Petrucha • unpublished photos & art • Sutton interview, checklist, cover gallery, & classic reprint • Jose Delbo, Henry Scarpelli, Pete Morisi, Jack Keller, & Grass Green • Charlton yearly checklist, pt. 2 • covers by Tom Sutton • 72 pages, **$7.95**

***Charlton Spotlight* #4** (Fall 2005) **Pete Morisi tribute**
Steve Skeates, Bill Pearson, Mark Burbey, Glen Johnson, Ron Frantz, & more • unpublished photos & art • Steve Morisi interview, PAM Charlton checklist, cover gallery, classic reprint • memoirs by Denis Tiani & Tom Christopher • Nicola Cuti's Weirdlings • Charlton yearly checklist, pt. 3 • covers by Pete Morisi • 76 pages, **$7.95**

***Charlton Spotlight Comics* #1**
(2014) Hey kids, comics!
Three brand-new stories by **George Wildman, Donnie Pitchford, Bill Pearson & Z. Capistance** • featuring Timmy the Timid Ghost, Atomic Rabbit, and Chameleon! • cover by George Wildman • full color comic book • 24 pages, **$4.95**

***Charlton Spotlight* #5** (Fall 2006) **Joe Gill & Steve Ditko**
Joe Gill interview with Jim Amash, unpublished photos & art • Captain Atom, Blue Beetle & The Question • rare 1950s Ditko reprint • Steve Skeates on Ditko & Aparo • Charlton text stories • 1973 Charlton visit • Nicola Cuti's Weirdlings • Charlton yearly checklist, pt. 4 • front cover by Nicola Cuti • classic back cover by Steve Ditko • 80 pages, **$7.95**

***Charlton Spotlight* #6** (Fall 2008) **All art & comics**
Unpublished E-Man & Mauser stories by Nicola Cuti & Joe Staton • Charlton Gallery: unpublished, rare art, artifacts & photos with Ditko, Sutton, Giordano, Newton, Boyette, Fraccio, Tallarico, Wildman, Gentile, Gill, Masulli, Santangelo, Gibson & more • Nicola Cuti's Weird Kids • Charlton yearly checklist, pt. 5 • front cover by Joe Staton • back cover by Pat Boyette • 68 pages, **$7.95**



***Charlton Spotlight* #7** (Winter-Spring 2011-12) **George Wildman & Dick Giordano**
George Wildman interview • Paul Kupperberg & Ron Frantz on Dick Giordano • Nicola Cuti's Weird Kids • Charlton yearly checklist, pt. 6 • front cover by Donnie Pitchford • back cover Dick Giordano cover montage • full color • 40 pages, **$7.95**

***Charlton Spotlight* #8** (Fall-Winter 2013-14) **Nicola Cuti & Tom Sutton**
Nicola Cuti interview • unpublished Tom Sutton Doomsday+1 story • George Wildman hidden objects puzzle • Paul Kupperberg's Charlton origins • Ron Frantz on Alex Toth • Nicola Cuti's Weird Kids • front cover montage • back cover by Tom Sutton • full color • 52 pages, **$9.95**

US orders, please add $3 S&H for one magazine; Canada, add $5; elsewhere, add $11. For ***Charlton Spotlight Comics*** only, US add $2 S&H for one comic, Canada, $4, elsewhere, $6. Inquire for S&H on quantity orders. Check/MO in U.S. funds payable to **Argo Press,** PayPal to **charspot01@austin.rr.com**, or visit our Web site!

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HA! YEAH, LUM, THEY LOOK DOWNRIGHT BACKWOODSY!
LUM and ABNER
YEAR 1
(2011-12)
CREATED BY CHESTER LAUCK & NORRIS GOFF
SUPERVISED BY GEORGE WILDMAN
STORY & ART BY DONNIE PITCHFORD
LUM and ABNER YEAR 2 2012-13
BASED ON CHARACTERS CREATED BY CHESTER LAUCK & NORRIS GOFF
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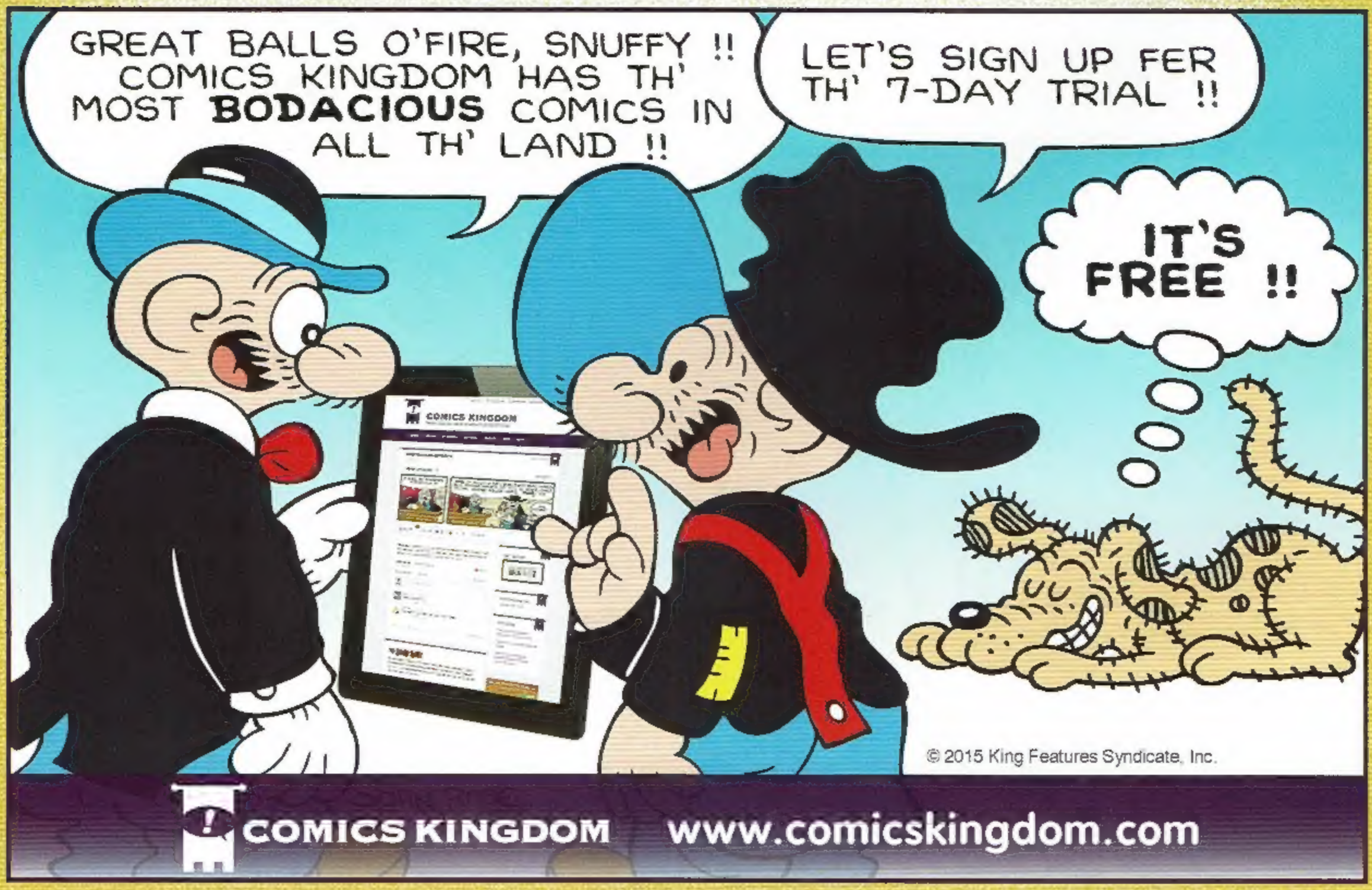
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